

# HISTORICAL SKETCHES

RELATING TO

## SPENCER, MASS.

BY

HENRY M. TOWER.



UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS  
AT AMHERST



UNIVERSITY LIBRARY  
Special Collections & Rare Books

Spec.  
Coll.  
F  
74  
S77  
T7  
v.1











# HISTORICAL SKETCHES

RELATING TO

SPENCER, MASS.,

BY

HENRY M. TOWER.

---

VOLUME I.

---

1901.

---

SPENCER, MASS.,  
W. J. HEFFERNAN—SPENCER LEADER PRINT  
1901

“I shall pass through this world but once---therefore if there be any good I can do, let me do it now, for I shall never come this way again.—*Quaker Saying*”



HENRY M. TOWER.  
Born in Spencer, July 23, 1817.

## PREFACE.

---

Some things are said to happen. If this be true, it can be so said of this book. It is one of those incidents in life that come without predetermination. I had been chosen by the committee in charge to write the Samuel Bemis historical address and had gathered more material of value than could well be utilized in a paper of an hour's length. It was then suggested that the whole be published in book form and this appearing to be desirable, the idea took definite form, being extended, however, to include other historical papers.

Spencer, Mass., Oct., 1901.

## RECORDS CONSULTED.

Hatton's Emigrants, 1600 to 1700.

Early Massachusetts marriages.

Bemis Family in America.

Newhall's "Record of my Ancestry."

Histories of Spencer, Brookfield, Leicester, Lancaster, Charlton, Oxford, Worcester, Watertown, Sudbury, Marlboro, Framingham, Ipswich, Harvard, Rutland and Shirley.

Records at Essex Institute, Salem.

Records at Genealogical Rooms, Boston.

Records at State House, Boston.

County Records at Springfield, Worcester, Cambridge and Salem.

Town Records of Spencer, Leicester, Brookfield, Watertown, Ipswich and Topsfield, besides church and other records, from all of which some items of interest have been gleaned.

## NATHANIEL WOOD.

---

Who he was is a mystery no longer. Since the publication of the first edition of Draper's history sixty years ago and presumably years before that, many wanted to know more than that work contains concerning the mysterious first settler in Spencer, the man who came, no one knew from whence, who tarried no one knew how long, who disappeared like the Arab that "folded his tent and stole silently away," no one knew whither. He was our Melchisedek; the man who appeared to have had neither beginning nor ending of days. So far as local information was obtainable, James Draper occupied a pre-eminent position to gather the facts, for he knew men whose fathers were contemporaries with this, the first settler. The knowledge he obtained, however, was meagre, too meagre indeed to be the satisfactory sum total of information desired. And so it has remained for one of a later generation to institute a persistent search among the records of the past in order to find out if possible who this man was.

### **Records Found.**

The search has proved to be successful. Many records, though widely scattered, have been found which reveal the identity of the man, and these are herewith largely reproduced. One very interesting point brought out is his participation in the Narragansett fort fight, one of the most noted battles in Indian warfare, and which resulted in the total destruction of their fort and practically the annihilation of the Narragansett tribe. And now when the history of Spencer shall be rewritten, as it should be before many years, Nathaniel Wood will appear therein not as a stranger but a man whom we know about and honor as the very first white man to settle in Spencer and who acted well his part in the great drama of the establishment in America of a nation based on the eternal principles of Justice.



## HISTORY OF NATHANIEL WOOD.

---

The first white man known to have settled in that part of Leicester now called Spencer was Nathaniel Wood of Ipswich and Draper's History names 1717 as the date. It is possible that some white man or men, made at an earlier date the clearing on Bare Hill, lot 64, noted by the first pioneers of record, but if such was the case there is no clue whence they came or whither they went. It is known, however, that the Indians had a burial ground about a half mile south east of this hill and this would indicate their continued presence in considerable numbers in that vicinity. It is also known that they had an annual burning over of their upland hunting grounds for the purpose of keeping down the brush and to facilitate travel when in search of game. They also were tillers of the soil to a limited extent, and these facts lead up to the conclusion that they may have made the clearing on Bare Hill, but all that is now positively known in regard to the same is that the hill was in shape for cultivation when the first settlers came, while all the other upland in town was covered with the forest primeval.

### **His Brookfield Land.**

The first indication we have that Nathaniel Wood had an interest in this section is from a vote taken "at a meeting of the committee for Brookfield, November ye 22nd, 1715" when it was "granted at ye same time to Nathaniel Wood forty acres of upland and twenty of meadow and in case he finds no meadow to have upland equivalent as others have." Later records disclose the information that he selected the forty acres of upland adjoining the Leicester line with the Seven Mile river as its southern boundary and that from this stream his land extended north 165 rods, with 36 rods as the average width. The next we hear of Mr. Wood in the order of time is his purchase of 100 acres of land in Leicester adjoining the Brookfield grant and his settlement on the same. Presumably this was in the summer of 1717, since prior to that time he could have obtained no title to the land, as will appear from the following:

On June 6, 1717, the proprietors owning the undivided land in what is now Spencer, met in Boston and proceeded to draw lots

of the northern half of the territory according to a plan, a transcript of which can be found in Draper's History. The two lots 29 and 36 adjoining each other, containing five hundred acres and whose western boundary was the Brookfield town line, were drawn by Paul Dudley, Esq., who thus became the first individual white owner.



PAUL DUDLEY, ESQ. Son of Joseph Dudley, Governor of the Province of Massachusetts Bay from 1701 to 1716. He graduated in 1690 from Harvard College at the head of his class; was Attorney General in 1702 and later Chief Justice of the Supreme Court

### **His Leicester Land.**

Nathaniel Wood purchased the Western end of lot 36, having the Seven Mile river as its southern boundary. His line on the east is now the site of an ancient stone wall, built probably by Samuel Bemis, as all the stone used appear to have been taken from his land. This wall was laid parallel to the Brookfield line of 1714 and was designed to run due north and south. It is on the western slope of Bemis hill east of the present residence and brickyard of Cyril Coron. Brookfield, being dissatisfied with the

survey of 1714, her selectmen in 1719 caused another line to be run which later was established by order of court. This new line took 17 acres off the Wood farm, supposed to have been in Leicester and added it to his Brookfield land. The line as finally established crosses the Brookfield road near Wood's brook at the foot of the hill east of the Howland farm buildings. From here the land of Mr. Wood extended west about 58 rods, thus including nearly if not all the home farm now occupied by Lewis D. Howland.

### His Ancestry.

Nathaniel Wood now being settled in Leicester, it may be well to inquire who he was. His father was Obadiah Wood, who settled in Ipswich in 1649 and probably came from England. The name of the first wife of Obadiah was Margaret. She died July 5, 1667. His second wife had a singular name as will be noted by the following inscription on her headstone at Ipswich. "Hazelelpony Wood, widow of Obadiah Wood died November ye 27, 1714. Aged 78 years. Wright blessed are ye dead who die in ye Lord." Obadiah Wood was a baker by trade and had a license to sell cakes and penny beer. He made his will Oct. 26, 1691 and left an estate of 185 pounds, of which amount Nathaniel was willed twenty shillings. His seal was a coat of arms. His children, probably all by his first wife, were Obadiah, Nathaniel, Josiah, Samuel, James, Joseph, Elizabeth, Mary, Susannah, Margaret and Ruth.

### His Children.

Nathaniel was probably born about the year 1657. He married Lucy —, who was admitted to the Topsfield church and baptized April 30, 1693. Their children were:

By whom presented for baptism.	{		Nathaniel Jr., born May 7, 1693.
		Lucy Wood her	Nath'l Jr., baptized Sept. 3, 1693.
			Obadiah, Nov. 1, 1696.
			Lucy, . . . . .
		" " "	Margaret, baptized Oct. 26, 1701.
		Goodwife " "	Abigail, baptized Nov. 5, 1704.
			Hepzibath, born July 24, 1707.
		Lucy " "	" baptized Sept. —, 1707.
			Mary, baptized July 18, 1708.
		Nathaniel " his	Zeruah, baptized June 18, 1710.

From the above it appears probable that when Nathaniel Wood came to Leicester, his family consisted of himself, aged 60; his wife; Nathaniel Jr., aged 24; Ruth, 18; Margaret, 16; Abigail, 14; Hepzibath, 10; Mary, 9, and Zeruah, 7 years of age. No record has been obtained of his son, Obadiah, other than that of his baptism, and it is presumed he died in childhood.

### Comes Near Losing His Brookfield Land.

In 1720 he seems to have been on the point of losing his Brookfield property because he had failed to meet the conditions of the grant which is stated in the records of a meeting of the town committee: "Sept. ye 14th, 1713" when "the committee then agreed that all grants of land hereafter made shall be upon the conditions following, viz:

- 1st. That they shall work upon ye land granted within six months from ye grant in order to a settlement
- 2nd. That they shall come and live upon it within a year from the grant.
- 3d That they shall live upon it three years commencing from the grant
- 4th That in case the grantees fail in any of ye particulars of articles aforesaid then the grants to revert to ye town again "

Admitting his failure to comply with the conditions, Nathaniel Wood appeals to the voters of Brookfield in open town meeting for a renewal of the grant which meets with favor, although he is deprived of his opportunity to secure meadow land as the record reveals.

Brookfield, Decr ye first, 1720 Whereas, Nathaniel Wood had a grant made by the former committee bearing date November ye 22d, 1715, and said Wood not fulfilling the conditions of said grant as of record but falling short, but having paid some money towards ye publick charges of this town, we do at a legal town meeting grant to said Nathaniel Wood forty acres of land; he ve said Wood aquitting his former grant and not else and for the confirmation whereof I do set my hand this first day of December, 1720.

In presence of us, witnesses:

TILLY MIRICK,  
PHILIP GOSS.

*Nathaniel Wood*

Attest,

JOSEPH JENNINGS, *Moderator.*

To this agreement Nathaniel Wood signed his name, but in all subsequent documents thus far discovered to which his name is affixed, his mark appears, thus indicating impaired eyesight or other physical infirmity.

### Moves to Brookfield.

Since the terms of his Brookfield grant demanded that the soil be occupied within one year from the date of confirmation, it is fair to assume that Nathaniel Wood moved from Leicester in the fall of 1721, and became with the exception of being a voter, what all along he practically had been, a citizen of Brookfield. This conclusion is reached because although living in Leicester, he never paid any taxes to that town but did at some time during those years pay taxes to Brookfield. Again he likely would have

been taxed in Leicester if the improvements made on his Leicester farm had been of sufficient value to have taken his property out of its probable classification as wild land, and hence untaxable. On the 29th of Sept. 1721, we find him deeding away his Leicester land to his children as will be seen by the following record:

### **Sells His Land in Leicester.**

*"Know all men by these presents,* that I, Nathaniel Wood of Leicester in the County of Middlesex in the Province of the Massachusetts Bay in New England, do for and in Consideration of a valuable sum to me in hand paid by my son, Nathaniel Junior, and for a valuable sum paid to me in hand by my daughters Ruth, Margaret, Abigail, Hepzibath and Zeriah Wood, bargain, sell, alien and do by these presents bargain, sell and confirm unto my aforesaid son, Nathaniel Wood Junior, and my aforesaid daughters all my land lying in Leicester aforesaid excepting my wife's thirds which I reserve for her life time which is also by these presents after her decease sold as the other is now, the one half to my son Nathaniel Wood Junior of Leicester aforesaid and the other half to my daughters aforementioned as it lyeth on both sides the County Road which goeth to Brookfield, and joyning to Brookfield township line Westwardly, to have and to hold Peaceably and Quietly to Enjoy with the Profit, Privileges and appurtenances, ways and easements "

29 Sept 1721.

On the 30th of December, 1725, he again deeds his Leicester land to his children by a document which is substantially a copy of his deed of 1721; for what reason is not known.

### **In the Narragansett War.**

From records which follow it appears that Nathaniel Wood was a soldier in the Colonial War against the Narragansett Indians in 1675, and in 1728, fifty-three years after the final battle, the colony of Massachusetts Bay fulfilled the agreement made to the soldiers in that war, when before marching to the front they were promised on the plains at Dedham in behalf of the Massachusetts Council that "if they played the man, took the fort and drove the enemy out of the Narragansett country, which was their seat, they should have a gratuity beside their wages." This gratuity took the form of a gift of land in what was then called Narragansett Township No. 3 and was located in what is now the town of Amherst, New Hampshire. This grant does not appear to have been of very great value as records later show that in 1736 a one-fourth interest in this tract was sold for \$15.25. This was indeed tardy justice, for a majority of those who served in that war were already dead and past need of recompense. In order to bring vividly before the mind the danger and hardships of the soldiers during that sanguinary conflict and to illustrate the value of their services in securing peace and safety to the white settlements, the story of the campaign is herewith annexed :



YE NARRAGANSETT FORT FIGHT IN RHODE ISLAND, DEC. 19, 1675. REPRODUCED FROM AN OLD MASSACHUSETTS HISTORY.

### **Preparing for the Conflict.**

This war, which lasted three years, began in 1675, the first troops being levied on June 24 of that year, when the news of the attack of the Indians on Swansea reached Boston. Rev. Geo. M. Bodge refers to the preparation as follows: "After their somewhat disastrous campaign of the early autumn of 1675 in the western part of the colony of Massachusetts, the United Colonies, upon information that the hostile Indians with Philip were retiring towards the south and to winter quarters among the Narragansetts, determined to carry the war against this powerful tribe, who for some time had shown themselves actively hostile. The veteran troops were recalled and reorganized; small towns in various parts of the colonies were garrisoned, and an army of one thousand men was equipped for the winter campaign. General Josiah Winslow, Governor of Plymouth Colony, was appointed commander-in-chief of the army; Major Samuel Appleton to the command of the Massachusetts regiment, Major William Bradford that of Plymouth, and Major Robert Treat that of Connecticut. War was formally declared against the Narragansetts on the 2d of November, 1675, in a meeting of the United Colonies held at Boston that day."

### **Promise on the Plains of Dedham.**

General Winslow assumed command of the Massachusetts forces Dec. 9, 1675; they were drawn up on Dedham Plain, where they were formally delivered to him by Major-General Davison. To the soldiers a proclamation was made at the time on the part of the Massachusetts Council, that "if they played the man, took the fort, and drove the enemy out of the Narragansett country, which was their seat, that they should have a gratuity besides their wages." On the afternoon of the same day they marched twenty-seven miles to Woodcock's garrison, now Attleboro. In the evening of Friday, Dec. 10, they arrived at Seekonk. From there a portion of the command proceeded by water, the first of the troops "ferried over the water at Providence," and probably formed a junction with the main part of the Plymouth regiment at Providence on the 11th. On the 12th the troops crossed the Pawtuxet river, and reached Wickford on the 13th, where those who had gone by water from Seekonk had already arrived; that day one of the companies captured 36 Indians. At Wickford there was a garrison house, and on the 14th the whole command, excepting one company which was left behind to keep the garrison, moved through the neighboring country to the westward, where they burned the village of the sachem, Ahmus, destroying 150 wigwams, killing 7, and capturing 9 Indians. Scouting

in the vicinity was continued with more or less effect on the following day. The country through which the troops passed seems to have been pretty thoroughly scouted by the detachments from the main command as it moved, so that on the 15th they had captured or killed 50 persons, and had at that time 40 prisoners. Two days later 47 captives were disposed of. On the 18th the march was resumed, a small garrison remaining as a guard to the supplies at Wickford, and the troops reached Pettiquamscoot in the evening, where they found the Connecticut troops, who had preceded them; these troops consisted of about 300 Englishmen and 150 Mohegan Indians. Here the strong stone garrison house, which they had hoped to occupy, was in ruins, having been recently destroyed by the Indians; a fact which had been discovered the day before by Capt. Prentice, who had scouted the country in that direction by his cavalry troop. This was a great disappointment, and increased the hardship they had to endure. In a severe snow storm, the whole force of about one thousand men encamped in an open field through an intensely cold night. On Sunday morning, Dec. 19, before daybreak, the whole force marched toward the enemy's stronghold, wading through the snow fourteen or fifteen inches deep.

### **The Narragansett Fort Fight.**

An account of the battle was given by Rev. Geo. M. Bodge in the N. E. Historical and Genealogical Register for January, 1886, as follows :

"About 1 o'clock p. m. the army came upon the enemy at the edge of the swamp, in the midst of which the Indian fortress was built, the Massachusetts troops leading in the march, Plymouth next, and Connecticut bringing up the rear. Of the Massachusetts troops, Captains Mosely and Davenport led the van and came first upon the Indians, and immediately opened fire on them—thus in the beginning gaining the important advantage of the first fire, which the Indians had almost always gained and made so deadly by deliberate volleys from ambush, as they doubtless purposed now. The Indians returned the fire with an ineffectual volley, and then fled into the swamp closely followed by the foremost companies, who did not wait for the word of command, or stand upon the 'order of their going,' until they reached the fortifications within which the Indians hastily betook themselves. This fort was situated on an island of five or six acres in the midst of a cedar swamp, which was impassable except to the Indians by their accustomed paths, and now made passable only by the severe cold of the previous day and night. It is probable that the Indians depended principally on this swamp to protect them, though their defenses are described as having been enclosed, and from a careful



comparison of the most reliable accounts, it seems that the fortifications were well planned, probably by an Englishman, Joshua Teffe, or Tift, as Mr. Dudley calls him. Mr. Hubbard says: 'The Fort was raised upon a kind of island of five or six acres of rising land in the midst of a swamp; the sides of it were made of Palsadoes set upright, which was compassed about with a hedge almost a rod in thickness.'

### **How the Fort Was Made.**

"A contemporaneous writer (whose account was published in London, and is reprinted in Drake's publication called the 'Old Indian Chronicle') says: 'In the midst of the swamp was a piece of firm land, of about three or four acres, whereon the Indians had built a kind of a fort, being palisaded round, and within that a clay wall, as also felled down an abundance of trees to lay quite round the said fort, but they had not quite finished their work.' It is evident from these, the only detailed accounts, and from some casual references, that the works were rude and incomplete, but would have been almost impregnable to our troops had not the swamp been frozen. At the corners and exposed portions rude block-houses and flankers had been built, from which a raking fire could be poured upon an attacking force. Either by chance, or by the skill of Peter, their Indian guide, the English seem to have come upon a point of the fort where the Indians did not expect them. Mr. Church, in relating the circumstances of Capt. Gardiner's death, says that he was shot from that side 'next the upland where the English entered the swamp.' The place where he fell was at the 'east end of the fort.' The tradition that the English approached the swamp by the rising land in front of the 'Judge Merchant' house, thus seems confirmed. This 'upland' lies about north of the battlefield.

### **Pursuing the Enemy.**

"Our van pursued those of the enemy who first met them so closely that they were led straight to the entrance used by the Indians themselves, perhaps more by their design than to attract attention from an exposed part of their works a short distance away. The passage left by the Indians, for their own use, as before mentioned, was by a long tree over a 'place of water,' across which but one man could pass at a time, and which 'was so waylaid that they would have been cut off had they ventured.' Mr. Hubbard counts among the fortunate circumstances of that day that the troops did not attempt to carry this point a little farther on. This was at a corner of the fort where was a large unfinished gap, where neither palisades nor abatis, or 'hedge,' had been placed, only that

the block house opposite this gap and the flankers at the sides were finished, from which a galling fire might sweep and enfilade the passage.

### **Two Captains Slain.**

“It is said that the companies of Captains Davenport and Johnson came first to the place, and at once charged through the gap and along the log at the head of their companies, but Johnson fell dead on the log, and Davenport a little within the fort, and their men were met by so fierce a fire that they were forced to retire again and fall upon their faces to avoid the fury of the musketry until it should somewhat abate. Mosely and Gardiner, pressed to their assistance, met a similar reception, losing heavily, till they too fell back with the others, until Major Appleton coming up with his own and Capt. Oliver's men, massed his entire force as a storming column, and it is said that the shout of one of the commanders that the Indians were running, so inspired the soldiers that they made an impetuous assault, carried the entrance again, beat the enemy from one of his flankers at the left, which afforded them a temporary shelter from the Indians still holding the block house opposite the entrance. In the meantime, the general, holding the Plymouth forces in reserve, pushed forward the Connecticut troops, who, not being aware of the danger from the block house, suffered fearfully at their first entrance, but charged forward gallantly, though some of their brave officers and many of their comrades lay dead behind them, and unknown numbers and dangers before. The forces now joining beat the enemy step by step, and with fierce fighting, out of their block houses and various fortifications

### **Five Hundred Wigwams Burned.**

“Many of the Indians driven from their works fled outside, some doubtless to the wigwams inside, of which there were said to be upwards of five hundred, many of them large and rendered bullet-proof by large quantities of grain in tubs and bags placed along the sides. In these many of their old people and their women and children had gathered for safety, and behind and within these as defences the Indians still kept up a skulking fight, picking off our men. After three hours' hard fighting, with many of the officers and men wounded or dead, a treacherous enemy of unknown numbers and resources lurking in the surrounding forests, and the night coming on, word came to fire the wigwams, and the battle became a fearful holocaust, great numbers of those who had taken refuge there being burned.

### **Dreadful Carnage.**

“There had been dreadful carnage in proportion to the numbers engaged. It is not certain at just what point the Plymouth

forces were pushed forward, but most likely after the works were carried, and the foremost, exhausted, retired for a time bearing their dead and wounded to the rear; but we are assured that all took part in the engagement, coming on in turn as needed. It is doubtful if the cavalry crossed the swamp, but were held in reserve and as scouts to cover the rear and prevent surprise from any outside parties.

"When now the fortress was burning and destruction assured our soldiers hastily gathered their wounded and as many as possible of their dead, and formed their shattered column for the long and weary march back to Wickford.

"I wish here to record my protest against the unjust, often weak, and always inconsiderate, criticism bestowed upon our leaders in this campaign, and especially in this battle, for their lack of foresight in abandoning the shelter and provisions of the fort, the security of the lives of our wounded men through removal, and the dangers and fatigue of a long march, and their inhumanity in burning the helpless in their huts and wigwams.

### **Some of our Best Men in the Fight.**

"It is well to remember at the start that many of the wisest, ablest, best and bravest men of the three colonies were the leaders in this affair.

"A noble commander, wise and brave, reverend ministers, by no means backward in their opinions; the most prominent and skilful surgeons the country afforded; veteran majors and captains of Massachusetts and Connecticut, with their soldiers fresh from the severe experiences in the western campaign, inured to danger and experienced in Indian wiles and deceits.

"They were some sixteen miles from their base of supplies at Wickford (it is doubtless if they had noticed the Indian supplies until the burning began). There was no way of reaching their supplies of provisions and ammunition at Wickford except by detaching a portion of their force now greatly reduced by death, wounds and exposure. The number of Indians that had escaped and were still in the woods close at hand, were unknown, but supposed to be several thousand with the report of a thousand in reserve about a mile distant.

### **Indians Might Rally.**

"These were scattered and demoralized, but in a few hours might rally and fall upon the fort, put our troops in a weakened condition upon the defensive, and make their retreat from the swamp extremely difficult if not utterly impossible, encumbered as they would be by the wounded, whose swollen and stiffened wounds in a few hours would render removal doubly painful and

dangerous. Added to this was the chance of an attack upon the garrison at Wickford, and dread of the midnight ambuscade, which every hour's delay made more likely and would render more dangerous. Thus it seems to me that from the standpoint of military strategy, the immediate retreat to Wickford was best. As to humanity, we must remember the harsh times in which they were living, the contempt in which the Indians were held—first, as heathen, against whom war was righteous; second, as idle and treacherous vagabonds, with no rights which honest industry was bound to respect; third, as enemies, lying in wait to plunder, burn and destroy.

### **Carrying Wounded in a Blinding Snowstorm.**

"Of the march back to Wickford very little is known; though a bitter cold winter's night, in a blinding snow storm, carrying 210 of their wounded and dead, these soldiers who had marched from dawn till noon, had engaged in a desperate life-and-death struggle from noon to sunset, now plodded sturdily back to their quarters of the day before, through deepening snows and over unbroken roads."

While it is to be regretted that from Nathaniel Wood an account of his part in that famous battle cannot be obtained, the fact that he was there and did his full duty, adds to our interest in the man, and to the esteem in which he is held as the first settler in Spencer.

### **Nathaniel Wood Jr. Sells Brookfield Land.**

On Feb. 15, 1726, Nathaniel Wood Jr., of Brookfield, Husbandman, sold to Benjamin Brooks Jr., of Springfield, for

Fourty pounds, one tract of upland situate in Brookfield in ye county of Hampshire or in the town of Leicester in ye county of Middlesex, containing by estimation Fourty acres, bounded as followeth, lying north of Seven Mile river, running from said river northerly 165 rods to a walnut tree marked T, then westwardly 40 rods to a black oak tree marked T, being 32 rods wide at the south end, bounded westwardly on Phineas Walker's land and partly on John Hamilton, Jr. land southerly on the river, easterly on the town line, north on common land.

We learn from the will of Nathaniel Wood executed in 1732 that he had previously given to his children "my land which I had at Brookfield" and although no record has been found certifying to this statement, this partly accounts for the possession of the land by Nathaniel Wood, Jr.

According to records which follow, the Wood family again removed to Leicester but it seems probable that they returned to Ipswich in the spring of 1729 or earlier, as the Brookfield real estate had been sold in 1726, and now the Leicester land is practically disposed of to John Wood (not a relative) as follows:

## Nathaniel Wood, Jr., Sells Leicester Land.

“Nathaniel Wood Jr. of Leicester for 32 pounds paid by John Wood of Ipswich sells March 28, 1729, a full half part of a fifty acre lot that he bought of Col. Wm. Dudley of Roxbury, bounded southerly by Seven Mile river, westerly by Brookfield town line, northerly by land in Common belonging to Leicester proprietors, easterly by land of Samuel Bemis.” On the same date Nathaniel Wood Jr. disposes of his real estate in Ipswich that he inherited from his grandfather, Obadiah.

Deed of Nathaniel Wood, Jr. to John Wood, March 28, 1729.

I, Nathaniel Wood, Jr., of Leicester, son of Nathaniel Wood of Leicester; that is to say, eldest son of ye said Nathaniel Wood and grandson of Obadiah Wood, late of Ipswich in the County of Essex—Baker—for the full sum of 32 pounds in bills of credit to me in hand paid by John Wood of Ipswich—Shoreman—do sell to him my land in Ipswich which I inherited from my grandfather, Obadiah Wood, of Ipswich, by his will dated Oct 26, 1694.

The full text of the will of Obadiah Wood is as follows:

*In ye Name of God Amen,* I Obadiah Wood of Ipswich in ye County of Essex, Baker, this 26th of October in ye year of our Lord God One Thousand Six hundred and ninety-four beeing sicke in body but of good and perfect Memory Thanks bee to God doe make, constitute, ordain and declair this my last Will and Testament in maner and forme following, revoking and annulling by these presents all other and former Wills and Testaments by mee made in worde or writing and this only to bee taken for my last Will and Testament and none other And first I give and comit my soule into ye hands of Almighty God my Saviour and Redeemer in whom by ye meritt of Jesus Christ I Trust to bee saved and my body to ye Earth theare to be decently Interred at ye discretion of my Executors hereafter named and for my temporall Estat I will that all those debts and dutys that I owe in right and Conscience to any maner of person Shall bee well and truly payd by my executers after my decease,

I give unto my deare and Loveing Wife ye one halfe of ye Income of my wholl Estate dureing her widdowhood and in Case She Hapen to Marve my will is that my Sonn James pay her Twenty pounds.

Item I give and bequeathe unto my Eldest Sonn Obadiah fifty Shillings to bee payd in Twelve yeares after my decease.

Item I give and bequeath unto my Sonn Nathaniell Twenty Shillings to bee payd within ye Sd terme of years.

Item I give unto my Sonn Josiah Twenty Shillings to bee payd in ye Sd terme.

Item I give unto my Sonn Samuell five Shillings to bee payd in ye Sd terme

Item I give unto my Daughter Elizabeth three pounds to bee payd in four yeares after my decease

Item I give unto my Daughter Mary Fourty Shillings in Twelve yeares and a Child's Mantle that was my former wife's Imediately after my decease.

Item I give unto ye Child of my daughter Ruth deceased Ten Shillings in Twelve yeares after my decease.

Item I give unto my Daughter Susanna Thirty Shillings in ye Terme of Twelwe yeares.

Item I give unto my daughter Margaret Twenty Shillings in ye Terme of Twelwe yeares

Item I give unto my Sonn James and his Male heirs lawfully begotten of his body for Ever all ye rest of my Estat reall and personal of what nature or kind Soever and if it So hapen that hee dye without such Male-heir then my will is that my house and land bee given unto ye Eldest Sonn of my Sonn Nathaniel and ye Male heirs of his body lawfully begotten for Ever and if it so hapen that hee dye without such Issue then my will is that my Son Josiahs Eldest Son have my house and land and ye Male heirs of his body lawfully begotten for Ever and if hee happen to dye without such Issue my will is that it descend to ye Second Son of ye Sd Josiahs in like maner and in Case of faillure of such Issue to ye third and fourth Sonns and their issues for Ever and I doe appoint and constitute my well beloved wife and my son James Executors of this my last Will and Testament in wittness wheorof I have hear unto sett my hand and seale ye day and yeare Above written.

Signed, Sealed and declared in ye Presence

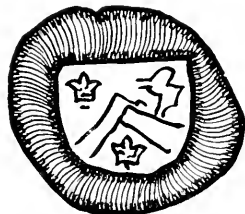
Jno Staniford,

Jacob foster,

John Sparke.

Jura by all three Dec. 3d, 1694.

Will proved Dec. 3d, 1694; Rec. Book Salem 303, Page 265.



The next document of interest is the will of Nathaniel Wood, executed at Topsfield, a town adjoining Ipswich, his birthplace.

### Will of Nathaniel Wood, Senior.

I, Nathaniel Wood of Topsfield, in the County of Essex in New England, being at this present of perfect understanding and memory but weak of body and not knowing how soon it may please God to call me out of this world, I have made such disposal of my temporal estate which God in his grace has given me in this world as followeth, and in the first place commending my immortal soul to the hands of God who gave it me whensoever it shall please God to take me out of this world and my body to a decent Interment, my Will is then as followeth:

Item—as for my son Nathaniel, I have given him his portion already by giving him a deed of Gift of half my land which I had at Brookfield.

Item—as for my daughter Mary, I have given her what I intended to in bringing up her child and in what I design to give him, which is hereafter mentioned

Item—as for my other half of the land which I had at Brookfield I have given by a deed of gift to my daughters hereafter named Ruth, Abigail and Hepzibah, which is what I design they shall have for their portion.

Item—I give and bequeath to my daughter Margaret the one half of that land which was granted to me by the General Court for serving his Majesty in the Narragansett War, and the other half to

be equally divided between my daughter Surviah and my grandson, Robert Down.

Item—My will is that my dear and well beloved wife, Lucy, shall have all my indoor movables during her life, and then my indoor movables to be equally divided amongst my daughters above named. Also I constitute and appoint my dear and well beloved wife Lucy, to be sole executor of this my last will and testament and in testimony of the truth of what is above written, I, the said Nathaniel Wood, have hereunto set my hand and seal this 26th day of Jan'y.

Anno Domini 1732.

HIS  
NATHANIEL X WOOD.  
MARK

Signed, sealed and delivered in the presence of  
witnesses,

Daniel Clark,  
Nathaniel Capen,  
Israel Clark.

ESSEX SS. IPSWICH, July 5, 1732.

Before the Hon. John Appleton, Esq., Judge of ye probate of Wills in said County of Essex, Daniel Clark, Nathaniel Capen and Israel Clark all personally appeared and made oath that they were present and saw Nathaniel Wood late of Topsfield, deceased, sign, seal and heard him publish and declare ye within instrument to be his last will and testament and when he did he was of good understanding and of a disposing mind to the best of their discerning and they at the same time set to their hands and seals in his presence as witnesses Sworn attest. DANIEL APPLETON, *Register*.

Upon which this will is proven, approved and allowed, it being presented by ye Executor therein named.

### **Nathaniel Wood Dies.**

As will be seen by the probating of the will, Nathaniel Wood was gathered to his fathers in the summer of 1732, and at this time his wife and most of his children appear to have been living either at Ipswich or Topsfield. His son, Nathaniel Jr. of Ipswich, and Mary Walcott of Salem were published Nov. 9, 1728. Presumably they were married and his wife deceased without issue. Again Nathaniel Wood Jr. of Ipswich and the "Widdo Elizabeth Goodhue of Chester in New Hampshire" were published Nov. 27, 1731 and later were married. At the Topsfield church Sept. 7, 1735, Nathaniel Wood Jr. "owned ye covenant" and on the same date his daughter Lucy was baptized. A son, Obadiah, was born Jan. 2, 1735, and these are all the children of Nathaniel Jr. whose names have been found recorded.

### **Jonas Bemis Probably did not Marry a Daughter of Nathaniel Wood.**

It therefore seems extremely improbable that Jonas Bemis, whom Draper's History says "married Dolly, daughter of Nathaniel Wood," could have found his wife in either of these families. The marriage record states that "Jonas Bemis of Spencer and

Dorothy Wood of Brookfield were married at Leicester Jan. 5, 1758." He was then twenty years of age and there was but one Dorothy Wood known to the Brookfield records of that time and she was the daughter of Josiah and Dorothy Wood, and was born in Brookfield, Feb. 9, 1733. She was thus four years the senior of Jonas Bemis, but in view of all the facts appears to have been the person whom he married. Objection might be made that she was called Dolly in the later years of her life. But Dolly is only a modification or substitute for Dorothy and there are numerous instances in the records of those times which show that such substitutions were not uncommon.

The last conveyance we have of Nathaniel Wood Jr. is dated in 1734 and disposes of his entire interest in the Leicester property, as follows :

Part copy of a Deed from Nathaniel Wood, Jr. of Epswich, county of Essex, to Robert Emmons of Brookfield, in ye county of Worcester, dated Apr. 8, 1734. For 40lbs good and lawful money 25 acres of land in the township of Leicester, viz: all my right of one hundred acres which lot of land was formerly laid out to Nathaniel Wood, Sr., the whole being bounded westerly upon the town line parting between Brookfield and Leicester and southerly upon seven mile river and easterly upon Samuel Bemis land and northerly bounded formerly on Corion land.

The reference to a deed establishing the fact that Nathaniel Wood served in the Narragansett war is found as follows in a conveyance from

### **Zerviah Wood to Margret Wood**

*Know all men by these presents,* that I, Zerviah Wood, Spinster, of Ipswich, in ye County of Essex, in his Majesties Province of Massachusetts Bay in New England, do for and in Consideration of three pounds ten shillings to me in hand paid by my sister, Margret Wood, Spinster, of Topsfield, in the County and Province aforesaid, I have bargained and sold and do by these presents bargain, sell, make over, ratify and confirm to her my sister, her heirs, executors, administrators and assigns, a certain parcel of land being one quarter part of a share of lands which my father, Nathaniel Wood, late of Topsfield, deceased, had or was to have had for his service done at ye Narragansett fort fight in the former Indian War, called Phillip's War, which land or lands I acquitted my claim thereto to my said sister, her heirs, etc. Mch. 17, 1734.

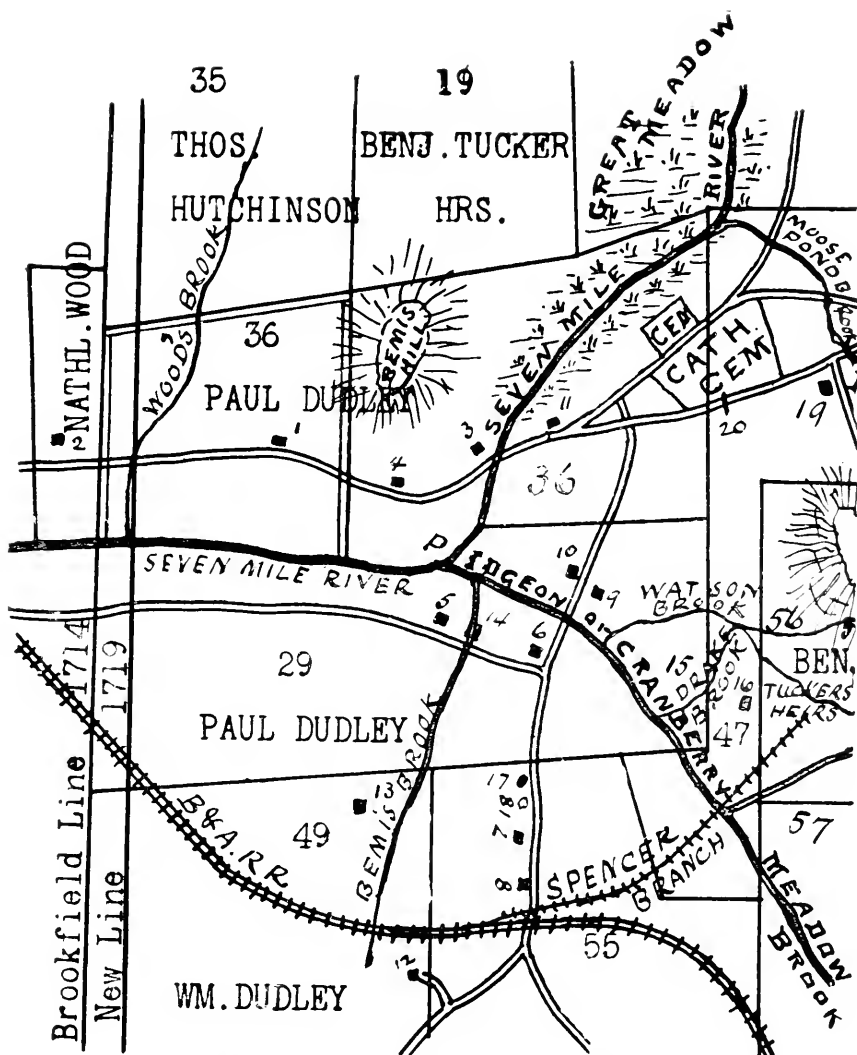
HER  
ZERVIAH X WOOD.  
MARK

Josiah Wood, mentioned above, was granted 165 acres of land by the town of Brookfield. His children of record are as follows:

Obadiah, born April 22, 1726,  
Anna, born April 5, 1729,  
Dorothy, born February 9, 1733,  
Thomas, born March 2, 1736.

It appears probable that Thomas Wood, brother of Dorothy, was the one who served in the French war in the same company with Jonas Bemis.





MAP SHOWING LOCATION OF LOTS 29 AND 36,  
Drawn by Paul Dudley, Esq., at the Proprietors' meeting in Boston, June 6, 1717.

### Explanation of Map.

Tract marked 36 with the Seven Mile river as the southern boundary and double lines on the three other sides, represents the 100 acres which Paul Dudley, Esq. probably sold to Nathaniel

Wood soon after the proprietors' meeting in Boston, June 6, 1717.

Tract marked Nathaniel Wood represents his Brookfield grant of forty acres in 1714, and which he selected adjoining the Leicester line with the Seven Mile river as its southern boundary.

1. It was here that Nathaniel Wood in 1717 built his cabin, which according to the late Abner Howland, for a long time owner of the farm, stood about eight rods north of the present residence of Cyril Coron. He was the first settler in the western half of the township of Leicester which is now called Spencer.

2. Nathaniel Wood in Brookfield. By the terms of his grant, confirmed to him December 1, 1720 for the second time, he must settle on the land within one year, and live on it three years



5—HOUSE PROBABLY BUILT BY NATHAN BEMIS, SR.

in order to get a clear title. It seems probable that he located his dwelling but a short distance west of the house now owned by Lewis D. Howland, and which stands on the original Wood tract. This house was erected in 1810 and at that time an old house stood not more than a rod distant from it to the west. It seems probable that this house may have been one that superseded the Wood cabin.

3. This is where Samuel Bemis, the second settler and founder of Spencer, settled in 1721, and within the boundary lines of lots 29 and 36 the location is shown of his 400 acres of land.

4. Lieut. Edmond Bemis, son of Samuel, settled here in 1749. Between 3 and 4, house 9 formerly stood, ten rods west of the Samuel Bemis house. This house was built by Amasa Bemis

for his son, Benjamin, but was moved to its present location in 1841, another story added, and then occupied by Danforth Bemis, son of Amasa, until his death, December 1, 1852.

5. This is the site of the original house built by Nathaniel Bemis on the 100 acres purchased of his father, Samuel, in 1753. Nathan Bemis, his son, inherited the homestead and after him his son, John Bemis 2d, who was the first inventor of rotary peg cutting machinery.

6. The Nathan Bemis Jr. place, now owned by Thomas Semino. Mr. Bemis owned and operated the saw mill west of his



6—NATHAN BEMIS, JR., HOUSE.

house. He and his wife Lucy died here from typhoid fever in the fall of 1856.

7. The Richard Beers house, built about 1761. The farm was afterwards owned by Nathaniel Bemis, Jr., and the house torn down about 1852.

8. George Bemis house, built 1852. The timber for this dwelling was sawed at the Nathan Bemis, Jr. mill.

9. Danforth Bemis house.

10. House owned by the Town of Spencer and occupied by the manager of the filter beds. This was formerly a school house in the South Spencer district.

11. This house was formerly an ell running north from the large tavern house built by Amasa Bemis in 1807, and connecting

with the first framed house of Samuel Bemis. It was used largely for wood and general storage purposes. It was said by the late Lorenzo Bemis, that formerly in the first story there were two doors opposite each other, one on either side of the house, and when a large log was needed for the fire place, a horse was hitched to one of the right dimensions and it was then drawn into this ell, the horse passing through, and the log, left inside where wanted. This house was moved to its present location about 1841, and was sold to Hannah Green, a daughter of Jonas Bemis, Sr.

12. Residence of Cheney Bemis, Sr., a son of Nathaniel Bemis Sr.



11—FIRST HOUSE EAST OF SEVEN MILE RIVER BRIDGE  
And first occupied in its present location by Hannah Green, Grand-daughter  
of Samuel Bemis, Sr.

13. The John Ormes place, settled in 1732 and house now destroyed. This is where Elizabeth Ormes, wife of John, died May 19, 1785, aged 100 years, 5 months and 9 days.

14. Nathan Bemis, Jr., saw mill, and John Bemis 2d, peg factory.

This mill was one of the old style with an up and down saw, and was on so small a stream that the heavier work of the year had to be done in the spring, at which time about sixty dollars for sawing was annually received. There were two reservoirs made further up the stream to hold water in reserve, and let down as needed.

15. "Pine Island," thus described in a deed from Samuel Bemis to Samuel Flagg in 1762, conveying 100 acres off

from the east end of his farm, but reserving this lot and a right of way to it through "gates and bars." It is not really an island, but is a tract of about eleven acres of upland surrounded largely by a meadow and with brooks flowing on all sides. It gained considerable notoriety, some fifty years or less ago, as the residence of one William Humphrey, a colored man, who with his family occupied a cabin here and made baskets, which he sold from house to house.

16. The original location of the house where Elijah Howe, Sr., settled about 1776.

17. The location of a large red oak now standing on the South Spencer road. This oak is three feet eight inches in diameter and is one of the very largest of its kind in Spencer.

18. Large boulder on the roadside about four rods south of the oak tree. It was here, in the fall of 1807, that three girls



12—THE CHENEY BEMIS HOUSE, SOUTH SPENCER.

about fifteen years of age, companions of Ruth Bemis, who lived with her father, Nathaniel, Jr., at the Richard Beers place some fifteen rods farther south, hid themselves one dark evening for the purpose of frightening their companion whom they knew would soon pass on her way home. They likewise knew that Ruth was an unusually timid girl. Their plan succeeded only too well and in great terror the girl ran home to fall in a swoon in the vestibule of her father's house. After her recovery from this she commenced to bleed from the lungs and rapidly declining in health, died May 5, 1808, aged 15 years, 8 months. Thus, what was conceived in a spirit of fun and as a harmless diversion, proved

in its sequel to be one of the saddest bereavements that ever came to the Bemis family.

19. The old district No. 9, Red school house, now at Westville, transformed into a dwelling and occupied by Orin D. Barr.

20. This is very near the place where about a century ago an attempt was made at highway robbery. The would-be robber, however, did not succeed. His intended victim, Dr. Benjamin Drury, one of the most distinguished men in Spencer at the time, being a man of nerve, and on horseback, was enabled to make his escape without the loss of his purse.

Between house No. 11 and the Seven Mile river, on the bluff about six rods from the stream, is the remains of the cellar of Sam-



CHENEY BEMIS,

Farmer of South Spencer, son of Nathan Bemis, Sr., and great grand-son of Samuel Bemis, Sr. Born in Spencer, July 6, 1798; died in Spencer, April 3, 1876, of old age; grandfather of Frank A. Drury, cashier Spencer National bank.

uel Flagg who in 1762 purchased of Samuel Bemis 100 acres of the east end of his farm and built a house at this place. Thirty-two years later, after Mr. Flagg had moved and settled on lot 67, Elijah Howe, Jr., and Fannie Bemis, daughter of Joshua, Sr., married, and here commenced housekeeping. They

started on a very moderate scale, she having only one tin pail for a great many cooking purposes, including its use as a teapot, while his complete list of mechanical appliances with which to get a living, consisted of one axe, but being good workers they soon managed to add to their stock such utensils for domestic use, and tools for mechanical use, as were needed until they were soon on a par in those respects with the more favored families in the town.

A hundred rods or more up the river northeasterly from No. 3 was located the Amasa Bemis family tomb.

On the plain west of the Catholic cemeteries is where the larger part of the Hessian prisoners, captured at Saratoga, encamped when they passed through Spencer, in October, 1777. The late Alonzo Temple learned from those living at the time, that the pine trees for quite a distance around the encampment were denuded of the lower dead branches in order to furnish fuel for their camp fires. The following account is taken from the *Spencer Star*, a paper published May 1, 1874: "In October, 1777, part of Burgoyne's captured army, over two thousand, passed through the place and spent the night in Spencer, occupying nearly every house and barn. The Hessian general entered the house of the minister (Rev. Joseph Pope), with an apology for the intrusion. His servants followed and were about to prepare his evening meal and couch for the night. The minister invited him to accept his hospitality and sit at his table. With a wave of his hand the general dismissed his servants. The minister's wife (Mrs. Anna Pope), then a bride of three weeks, who lived in the same house until over one hundred and four years of age, even after passing her one hundredth year, would tell the conversation of the general. One remark was 'that in no place were rank and subordination more strictly observed than in Hesse Cassel, and their ladies were ladies indeed.' On retiring for the night he entrusted to her care his badge of Knighthood and medals of Honor."

However gracious the German women of the general's acquaintance may have been, American history records that the Hessian soldiers were cruel and overbearing.

In the Nathan Bemis Jr. mill pond, south of the peg factory, Valentine, son of Dwight Hill, was drowned, June 5, 1831, aged 21. With a companion he had prepared to go in bathing, and stepping into the pond where the embankment was steep, soon was in the water out of his depth. Not being able to swim, his companion tried to rescue him, but nearly lost his own life in consequence as the drowning man clung to his would-be rescuer with all the tenacity of one who sees his last chance for life vanishing. Not being able to find the body, the mill pond was drawn off to obtain it.

# INCEPTION OF BEMIS MONUMENT.

---

The inception of the Bemis monument dates back to 1895. On Sept. 30 of that year the author wrote the following article, which was printed in *The Spencer Leader*:

## **A Monument to Samuel Bemis.**

"Nathaniel Wood is the historical first white settler in Spencer. For aught we know he may have been 'some village Hampden.' No one living knoweth. He appeared on the stage for a brief season and then vanished from the records of man.

"Not so the second settlers, Samuel Bemis and wife. They were typical New England pioneers. With means, ability and industry they came to subdue the wilderness and build for future generations. They came and settled as Draper fitly quotes:

'Where nothing dwelt but beast of prey  
Or men as fierce and wild as they.'

"They lived to complete their task and did the work well. Because of this they deserve to be held in everlasting remembrance. He and his descendants have helped not only to make Spencer but to make New England what it has been and is. Let us then erect to them a suitable memorial stone.

"Some huge uncut bowlder from the quarry will be in keeping with the theme. On this let there be placed a bronze tablet recounting their virtues. If descendants like Capt. Edmond Bemis have added glory to the family name, let their deeds also be inscribed thereon. Erect the stone under the ancient elm across the road from the original log cabin and later on first framed house in town. Let the Bemis family lead off in this movement, inviting citizens to follow. Let them arrange for a big family gathering next June. Let us have a public holiday, a good dinner and speeches."

## **Board of Trade Appoints Committee.**

This article excited favorable comment, but nothing more was done looking toward the consummation of the idea until March 30, 1901, when at a meeting of the Board of Trade, Mr. William J. Heffernan moved that a committee consisting of John G. Avery,



Dr. E. W. Norwood, Dr. Alonzo A. Bemis, Henry M. Tower, Amasa T. Bemis, E. Harris Howland and Henry Bemis, be appointed to raise money and erect a suitable memorial stone and tablet to the memory of Samuel Bemis and to make all arrangements necessary to carry that purpose into effect. The motion prevailed and later the committee organized, by choice of John G. Avery as chairman and treasurer, and Henry M. Tower, secretary. The work of raising the money then commenced, and was solicited only from those bearing the Bemis name, or from descendants of Samuel Bemis. The committee were gratified at the readiness with which those approached subscribed to the fund, and in a few months' time money enough had been promised to guarantee the success of the undertaking and the monument and tablet were then ordered.



JOHN G. AVERY.  
Chairman of the Board of Trade Committee.

In the meantime the committee had by vote invited Nellie Thayer Bemis to write a poem to be read at the dedicatory exercises and also Henry M. Tower to write the historical address, which invitations were accepted and the papers submitted by them now follow :

## Our Ancestors.

Written and Illustrated by Nellie Thayer Bemis.

---

Where to-day ye stand, once the primeval forest stood;  
Its mighty arms outspread, aloft in giant hardihood.  
Beneath its leafy canopies, along its shadowy aisles,  
Silent and swift the dusky red man's wiles  
Trapped the fierce and hungry beasts of prey,  
Or gliding softly in birch canoe he fished the winding river's way.



"A RUDE LOG CABIN ROSE."

All was silence : except as Nature's voices now and then awoke  
The lonely echoes of the wooded hills; or broke  
The brooding silence of the place and hour  
The great sun, as it rose at morn in majesty and power,  
The only timepiece No bells as now pealed out the days, the months, the years,  
The hours of man's hopes, his joys, his fears.

The muttering thunders rolled, the vivid lightnings flashed,  
 The mighty trees did rock and sway, their branches clashed;  
 Only the Great Spirit, the Indian braves, and beasts of prey,  
 The wood birds, and the listening flowers held sway.  
 Such was the fertile land now so changed; of ours  
 Long, long before our ancestors had felled the forest towers.



"THE STEALTHY INDIAN GAZED, WITH WONDERING EYES AFLAME."

But, one ne'er to be forgotten day the pale face came.  
 The stealthy Indian gazed, with wondering eyes aflame  
 As the resounding axe in mighty blows arose and fell,  
 Dealing destruction to his silent friends that he had loved so well.  
 Proudly had they towered, and proudly did they fall;  
 Dismembered, split, and hewn by one, a stranger to them all.

Soon in the little clearing a rude log cabin rose;  
 Around its ample hearthstone the red men (friendly foes)  
 Sat in silence grim and stern, or ate the Indian pone  
 With the pale face at his humble board, so fearless, and alone.  
 In time, the good wife and the little ones came through the wilderness  
 To fill the home with love and joy, the future years to bless.

Think ye those times were peaceful? That then were days of ease?  
Ah no! the wild beast and the Indian lurked darkly mid the trees,  
The red man's heart was filled with hate for the usurpers of his land,  
And only the food and shelter given stayed the arrow in his hand,  
As our early settler cleared the ground, and tilled the fertile soil,  
The trusty firelock at his side the enemy to foil.

His heart was filled with anxious care for the loved ones in the home,  
For the good wife, and the children left so helpless and alone,  
Honor to her so brave and true who traversed the forest wilds,  
With the young babe nestled in her arms for half a hundred miles;  
From fear of stealthy red men, and wandering beasts of prey  
She had sought her father's dwelling, nearly fifty miles away.

And through the trackless forest, with the babe scarce two weeks old,  
She came alone, unaided, save by the great trees told  
Such deeds of love, and daring, did our early forbears show,  
The grand old Pilgrim spirit did make their souls aglow,  
To open the wondrous western land the Pilgrim Fathers trod,  
And spread their motto far and wide, "Freedom to worship God."

Ye do well to give them honor, in monument and name,  
But ye may honor them far better by lives free from spot or blame.  
From the lives they gave for us, take the grandest and the best;  
Rear a bethel in your hearts, 'tis better than all the rest.  
May their courage, and the spirit of our Father's God be given  
To the children of the present time, and unto children's children.

# HISTORICAL ADDRESS

**On Samuel Bemis, with Short Sketches of His Ancestry and Posterity, Delivered in the Town Hall, Spencer, Mass., Oct. 29, 1901.**

*Descendants of Samuel Bemis, Citizens of Spencer and Friends :*

We have met to-day for a purpose unlike that of any previous gathering, to honor Samuel Bemis, the man who founded the town of Spencer and who was active in its development. Other days may come in which the names of distinguished benefactors of the town shall be publicly honored, but among them all this day will ever have an individuality all its own. There is but one second settler known to our history and this person is the one we honor to-day. No other man can again accomplish the work he did so well, or occupy his place in the annals of our town.

## **Daniel Webster on Ancestry.**

On a somewhat similar occasion, Daniel Webster said, "It is a noble faculty of our nature which enables us to connect our thoughts, our sympathies, and our happiness, with what is distant, in place or time; and, looking before and after, to hold communion at once with our ancestors and our posterity. Neither the point of time, nor the spot of earth, in which we physically live, bounds our rational and intellectual enjoyments. We live in the past by a knowledge of its history, and in the future by hope and anticipation. By ascending to an association with our ancestors; by contemplating their example and studying their character; by partaking their sentiments and imbibing their spirit; by accompanying them in their toils, by sympathizing in their sufferings, and rejoicing in their successes and their triumphs, we seem to belong to their age, and to mingle our own existence with theirs. We become their contemporaries, live the lives which they lived, endure what they endured, and partake in the rewards which they enjoyed. There may be, and there often is, indeed, a regard for ancestry, which nourishes only a weak pride. But there is also a moral and philosophical respect for our ancestors, which elevates the character and improves the heart."

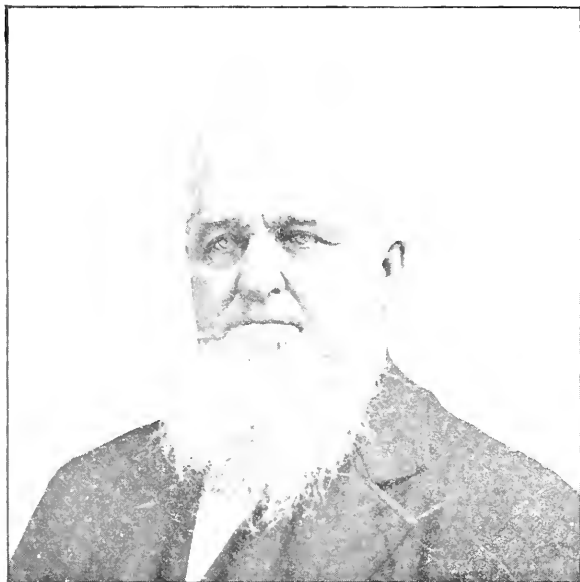
It is with this latter view in mind that a monument to Samuel Bemis has been erected, and this sketch of his life undertaken.

Memorial stones for worthy purposes have a value as object lessons which perhaps has never been more forcibly expressed

than in a speech by Edward Everett on the "Worth of the Bunker Hill Monument."

### **Edward Everett on the Value of Memorial Stones.**

He said: "But I am met with the great objection, what good will the monument do? And I ask what good does anything do? What is good? Does anything do any good? Does a railroad do good? Yes. It facilitates commerce, opens markets and



JOSHUA BEMIS

Born in Spencer, July 31, 1822, and now living, a great grandson of Samuel Bemis, Senior, farmer, road builder, contractor and saw mill owner; was one of the selectmen comprising the famous "War Board" during the Rebellion. (From a photograph by Louis N. Hevy.)

increases wealth. But what is this good for? Why, individuals prosper and get rich. And what good does that do? Is mere wealth as an ultimate end, good? Certainly not. But as men grow rich they live better. Is there any good in this, stopping here? Is mere animal life, feeding, working and sleeping like an ox entitled to be called good? Certainly not. But these improvements increase the population? And what good does that do? Where is the good in counting twelve millions instead of

six of mere feeding, working, sleeping animals? There is then no good in the mere animal life except that it is the physical basis of that higher moral existence which resides in the soul, the heart, the mind, the conscience. In good principles, good feelings and the good actions that flow from them. Now I say that generous and patriotic sentiments are good, good humanly speaking, of the highest order. It is good to have them, good to encourage them, good to honor them, good to commemorate them and whatever tends to animate and strengthen such feelings does right down



MOSES BEMIS

Born in Spencer, June 30, 1822, now living at Worcester, son of Nathaniel Bemis, Jr., and great grand-son of Samuel Bemis, Sr. He was for a great many years supt. of Bridge Construction for the Providence and Worcester R. R. Co.

practical good, and gives a value to everything which through the channel of the senses, the taste or the imagination, warms and elevates the heart."

### **Samuel Bemis a Type of the New England Pioneer.**

We are not looking to find in the life of Samuel Bemis the character of a great statesman who by his genius moulded empires, or a great warrior who by his valor subdued kingdoms, but a man who in his own field of action, in his own way and in his own time wrought out successfully the work of an intelligent New

England pioneer. But he was not alone in this work, for a multitude of co-laborers throughout New England were daily pursuing the same avocation, quietly, thoroughly, persistently, perhaps unconsciously, laying the foundation, broad and secure, for that system of government and education that has become the admiration of the world, and has given to New England ideas and character a prestige unparalleled in history, and never greater than it



GEORGE BEMIS.

Farmer, of South Spencer, son of Nathaniel Bemis, Jr., and great grandson of Samuel Bemis, Sr., born in Spencer, Feb. 9, 1818. Now Living.

is to-day. In Samuel Bemis we find the type of men that made possible the civilization we enjoy, and considering the number, the general character and patriotism of his descendants, it will be difficult to match the record of this family by a most diligent search among our archives.

### **The Bemis Family an Ancient One.**

The Spencer branch of the Bemis family traces its ancestry to John Bemis, who was born in Dedham, Essex County, Eng-



land, as early as 1550. His will was proved June 28, 1604, and reads as follows :

To my dutiful wife Anne, fifty pounds. To Isaac, my son, one hundred pounds. To Luke and James, my sons, one hundred and forty pounds each. To my daughter Susan fifty and six pounds. To my youngest sons, Joseph and Abraham, to either of them fifty pounds when they or either of them shall accomplish the full age of one and twenty years. To my daughter Grymwood and to her four children now living, to every one of them twenty shillings apiece. To Richard Smeeth of Brettenham, Suffolk, twenty shillings. To the poor of the same parish forty shillings. To my brother Thomas Bemis, five pounds, and to every one of his children twenty shillings apiece. To the poor of Dedham forty shillings. All the rest of my goods unbequeathed shall be distributed equally between my wife and two daughters Susan and Mary. — *N. E. Hist. and Genea. Register.*

The children of John and Anne Bemis, all born in England, were:—Isaac, Luke, Mary, James, Susan, Joseph and Abraham.

Joseph, son of John, married, lived and died in England. He had a son, Joseph, who was born in England in 1619, and who came to this country and settled at Watertown in 1640.—*Neachall's Record of my Ancestry.*

### Joseph Bemis, Grandfather of Samuel.

Joseph Bemis, the grandfather of Samuel, in 1640, when he was twenty-one years of age, emigrated from England and settled at Watertown. He was both a blacksmith and a farmer. Watertown at that time was a place of importance, and many men of wealth and distinction resided there. It was the fifth town in the state to be settled and was preceded only by Plymouth, Salem, Charlestown and Dorchester. Joseph Bemis appears to have been a man of good ability. He was chosen selectman for the years 1672 and 1675, and at other times filled the offices of constable, collector, school committee and "haward." He served on various town committees, two records of which are herewith reproduced, and these show in a marked degree the peculiarities of spelling and expression common to that time: At a town meeting in 1671,

The towne being desirous to ishshu thear diffarance abought stinting thear feeding land and the walkes of thear heardes have choosen 7 men from amongst them fellues to agre abought that mattur and if thay canot agre to the satisfacktion of the towne then thay heave chosen thre other ought of towne altogether unconserned in that businis whoe shall heave full power to detarmin the seame and all referance to prevent a sute now depending in Charlestown Corte. The parsons chosen from amongst them fellues eare Captin mason, Leftenant beares, decon hastings, Ensigne shearman, corparale bond, Joseph bemas, and John Randall; these not agreeing to

the satisfacktion of the towne Captin thomas, prentis Cornet, edward okes, deacon John Jackson eare chosen to heare and detarmin the seame before the 25 day of March next.

At a meeting of the selectmen at Simon Stone's house, Nov. 10, 1674,

Thomas fleg, John whitney and Joseph bemus gave in an account of what thay had found consarning children's eddication and John fisk being found wholly negligent of edducating his children as to Reding or catticising the selectt men agreed that Joseph bemus should warn him in to ansur for his neglect at the next meeting of the selectt men

In 1649 Joseph Bemis was fined three pounds by the selectmen for cutting twelve trees upon the common but of this fine



PERSIS GUILFORD.

Born in Spencer, Aug. 16, 1822, daughter of Dr. Jonas Guilford, Jr., and his wife, Persis Bemis, daughter of Joshua Bemis, Jr. She married Asa T. Jones, April 27, 1845, and was the mother of Asa T. Jones, now of Colorado Springs, Colorado.

the town subsequently remitted fifty shillings. In 1655 he was fined for having "1 Hog disorderly," otherwise he appears to have been at all times a law observing and abiding citizen.

The records show that he enjoyed the confidence and esteem of his fellow-citizens and was active in promoting the material

interests of the town. He was the father of nine children, the last of whom, John, born in 1657, became the father of Samuel, the hero of our sketch. Joseph Bemis died in 1684 and his estate inventoried more than a thousand dollars, which was quite a large sum of money for those days.

### **John Bemis, Father of Samuel.**

John, the ninth child of Joseph, was a farmer. He married Mary Harrington in 1680 and lived at Watertown. So far as his relation to town affairs and general usefulness are known, he appears to have maintained the same relative standing in the community achieved by his father and belonged to what is usually called the well-to-do middle class. He was at different times corporal, selectman, tithingman, school committee, "Sarvayar of Rhods," besides rendering service on special town committees. At a town meeting held in 1705 it was voted "that the town doe nominate, appoint and Impower John Bemus, Sr., John Hastings, Sr., and Daniel Harrington, Sr., to locke ought sum convenient place to keep the gramer schoole for the second quarter sum where neere where it was kept for the middle of the town last." In 1707 it was ordered at a town meeting "that Netl Bright and murings Sawin take Present caer of one Sarah Honey for her entertainment and also to Desire Doct. Palsgrave Wellington to locke after her wounds, and John Bemis was ordered to forthwith make inquiry how long she had been in town and report at next meeting."

John Bemis was the father of fourteen children and lived to the age of seventy-three years. Samuel, the sixth child, was born in 1690. At the age of twenty-six he married Sarah, daughter of John Barnard of Sudbury, by whom he had two children, Samuel Jr. and Edmund while living at Watertown.

### **Tide of Emigration Sets Inland.**

At this time (1721), there was a strong movement going forward to settle towns in the interior. A hundred years had passed since the Pilgrims landed. The coast towns were prosperous, but as farming was the principal avocation, it was foreseen by the leading men of the time that congested settlements were not for the best interests of the people and hence they took precautionary measures to prevent such a state of affairs, as we learn from Bond's History of Watertown. He says, "The population became so crowded that the people very early began to disperse either to form new plantations or to go to other towns already settled," and adds "Watertown has been a prolific hive, sending out swarms almost innumerable." Because the population was already overcrowded the freemen at an earlier date agreed "in consideration

there be too many inhabitants in the town and the town thereby in danger to be ruined, that no forraigner coming into town or any family arising among ourselves shall have any benefit of commonage or land undivided but what they shall purchase." These conditions although reasonable in themselves must have been obnoxious to the spirited young, and native born Americans, and no doubt many of them were ready when the opportune time came to launch out and settle in the freedom of the unbroken forests where men of wealth from Boston and other places had purchased of



PERSIS BEMIS.

Daughter of Joshua Bemis, Junior, and great granddaughter of Samuel Bemis, Senior. Born in Spencer, Sept. 22, 1795, married Dr. Jonas Guilford, Junior, June 20, 1816. Mother of Mrs. John G. Avery and Miss P. Maria Guilford.

the Indians large tracts of land at a nominal price, and were offering great inducements to those who would become actual settlers. The land comprising what is now Leicester and Spencer had been purchased for about two cents per acre. King Philip had been killed, his body quartered and his head placed on a gibbet at Plymouth forty-five years before, and he appeared to have no successor. It was thought there was safety for white men to venture again into the interior, take up the work of the husbandman and build themselves homes wherein they could dwell

in safety and contentment. The towns of Lancaster, Worcester, Oxford, Brookfield, Rutland and other places that had been laid waste during the Indian Wars or else had been partially or wholly abandoned were being rapidly re-peopled by settlers from the coast towns. The wars of King William and Queen Anne had ended and emigrants from the British Isles were coming to the land of freedom.

### **Samuel Bemis Decides to Emigrate to Leicester.**

It was under such circumstances that Samuel Bemis was moved to try his fortunes as a pioneer and on the 20th of July, 1721, we find him getting a deed to a tract of land in the then primeval forest located in what is now the town of Spencer, and



FRAGMENT OF SOAPSTONE KETTLE FOUND BY HARVEY PROUTY.

where he purposed establishing his home. It may be that his action was influenced to some degree by the small pox epidemic then raging in Boston, over eight hundred persons dying there of that dread disease this same year.

Four years before, Nathaniel Wood of Ipswich, the first settler, had purchased one hundred acres but a short distance to the west and adjoining the Brookfield line; otherwise, so far as known, there were no white inhabitants nearer than Leicester or Brookfield, both seven miles distant, although some think there were a few settlers living at what is now East Brookfield, which

presumption a careful search of the records might establish. Indians there were at Quaboag in Brookfield, their winter headquarters about three miles by the Seven Mile river trail. In summer their wigwams were to be found scattered along the streams or other places that afforded good locations for hunting, fishing or planting. On the farm now owned by Dr. Alonzo A. Bemis was a sheltered spot which seems to have been an annual camping ground, from the large number of stone implements formerly found there.

### Indian Relics.

Another place was a short distance northeasterly of District No. 4 school house, on a knoll in what is now mowing land. This location may have been chosen partly from its close proximity to the fine spring of water, whose crystal stream flows out into the roadside just south of the school house. Another location was on land now owned by Henry T. Faure, and northeast of his house. It was here that the late Harvey Prouty found the broken parts of a soapstone kettle which were joined together by Dr. C. P. Barton, and are now in the public museum. This kettle may have been made at Sutton where the Indians used to obtain steatite for such purposes.

Mr. Prouty also found a large number of stone implements near the same place. There also may have been an Indian encampment on a knoll of land some twenty rods or more easterly of the Lewis Hill house. It was here that the late Amos Snow found an excellent stone pestle and axe which were contributed to the museum by his son Edgar H. Snow.

### Wigwam Sites.

Two authentic sites of wigwams are now to be seen on the farm of Alonzo W. Green in the southeast part of the town. Another locality which appears to have been long inhabited, judging from the large number of stone implements formerly found there, was about a quarter of a mile southeasterly of the house of Ebenezer Howe. According to the testimony of Joel Howe, Sr., the Indians had a dugout or barn, as they were anciently called, for storing winter provisions at some point between the house of the late Hiram Howe and the house of John M.



INDIAN PESTLE AND AXE.

between the house of the late Hiram Howe and the house of John M.

Newton, but its location has not been preserved. It is thought this dugout was used for storing chestnuts which used to grow abundantly in that locality and which boiled or baked made a very nutritious article of food. One ancient chestnut tree that the Indians doubtless gathered nuts under is still standing nearby, and with the exception of one or two elms, has the largest girth of any tree in Spencer and a diameter of about seven feet. There were doubtless a great many other places in town known to the early settlers where the Indians had encampments, no record of which



JOEL HOWE.

A Spencer farmer, born Jan. 31, 1810, and now living, a great grand-son of Samuel Bemis Senior. He is a son of Joel Howe, a soldier of the Revolution. His mother was Esther Bemis, daughter of Joshua Bemis Senior. (From a photograph taken in 1900 by Parssello Emerson.)

remains, and since there is hardly a farm in town on which at some period in its history Indian implements have not been found, the conclusion is irresistible that the Red men occupied this section to a greater extent than has generally been supposed and although reduced in numbers by the Indian Wars, were pursuing their general course of life on the advent of Samuel Bemis into their ancient territory.

## **Samuel Bemis Purchases Land on Which to Settle.**

We left Samuel Bemis in Boston getting a deed to three hundred acres of land in Leicester from a committee specially authorized by the Great and General Assembly to sell the same and which they were willing to do in consideration of "ye just sum of eleven pounds ten shillings well and truly paid," or a price nine hundred per cent in advance of the sum paid the Indians thirty-four years before. The farm was bounded "southerly on land of ye town of Oxford, and westerly on Benjamin Thompson's land." Besides, the farm he was deeded "all ye wood, timber, well water, and water courses on ye same." The property became his in the mid-summer of 1721. James Draper says he commenced felling the ancient forest in 1720. This may be true but if the date was set forward a year it would appear more consistent with the records as we to-day find them. It would seem probable that in the spring of 1721 he took a trip to the westward to spy out the land. He reached the Seven Mile river. Here he found one of the first requisites to the pioneer, plenty of clear running water. The next essential was meadow land, and but a short distance up the stream he found the great meadows one-fourth of a mile wide and a mile long. Surely here was a plentiful supply for his horses, sheep and cattle. He discovered but a short distance to the west a level spot of ground suitable for his buildings, and high above any possible damage by the spring freshets. Timber also he saw in abundance ready for immediate use. He found a settler but a short distance towards Brookfield. He noticed that the place was on the main line of travel from Boston to Springfield. He is pleased with the general advantages of the situation, and finding out who the owners of this property were, returned to Watertown, talked it over with his wife and friends and proceeded to purchase it.

## **On the Trail for Leicester.**

Then with his horses and dog, his rifle and axe, and such other articles as he needs, he returns to build a log cabin, make a small clearing, all in readiness for the coming seed time and returned late in the fall to his home. The winter being past, with his wife, his two boys, his horses, cattle, dogs and such articles for domestic and farm use as were indispensable, he starts for his home in the wilderness and is all ready to take up the spring work. Now this may not have been what happened, but it is the most natural and consistent course he could have taken, and judging from all the facts we have at hand, this plan in its general features is most probable.



## Copy of Original Deed to Samuel Bemis.

To all Christian people unto whom these presents shall come, Greeting: William Dudley of Roxbury, in ye County of Suffolk and Province of ye Massachusetts Bay in New England, Esquire; Thomas Tileton of Dorchester and County aforesaid, Gentlemen; Thomas How of Molbrough and County of Middlesex and province aforesaid, Esquire; a committee fully authorized and improved by the Great and General Assembly of ye province aforesaid in their session held the 11th of Nov., 1719, to sell and dispose of a certain tract or parcell of land lying and being in ye said Province between the towns of Oxford in ye County of Suffolk, Leicester in ye County of Middlesex, Brookfield in ye County of Hampshire, which said tract or parcell of land is since by ye Great and General Court added unto and determined to be part of said County of Suffolk; viz: In ye session held at Cambridge in June, 1721, as by both votes and orders. Reference thereto had may and doth more fully appear. Know ye that ye said William Dudley, Thomas Tileton and Thomas How, for and in Consideration of ye full and just sum of Eleven pounds, ten shillings, well and truly paid by Samuel Bemis of Wattertown, in ye County of Middlesex aforesaid, Yeoman, ye Receipt whereof Dudley, Tileton, How, do hereby acknowledge, and ye said Samuel Bemis, his heirs, Executors and Administrators thereof and of every part and parcel thereof have acquitted, exonerated and discharged, have given, granted, sold, aliened and by virtue of ye power and authority aforesaid do give, grant, sell, alien, make over and confirm unto ye said Samuel Bemis, his heirs and assigns forever, one Certain Lott or tract of Land laid out in ye said 10,000 acres, being ye 36th Lott in number and ributted and bounded northerly on Land of John Flagg, Easterly on Samuel Dumer's Land, Southerly on land of ye town of Oxford, and Westerly on Benj. Thompson Land or however ye same is buttet and bounded, containing three hundred acres more or less To Have and to Hold ye said Lott of Land unto him ye said Samuel Bemis with all ye Rights, members priviledges and appurtenances to ye same in any manner belonging, and all ye wood, timber, well water and water courses in and on ye same, free and Clear from all manner of Incumbrances and Inconveniences whatever and the said William Dudley, Thomas Tileton and Thomas How as a Committee and Impowered as aforesaid, and on behalf of the Province aforesaid, do avouch themselves to be the true and lawful owners of ye above granted premises and have in themselves sufficient power and authority to dispose and sell ye same and by virtue and force of ye aforementioned acts of ye Great and General Court ye premises and every part thereof will to ye said Samuel Bemis, his heirs and assigns, uphold, maintain, warrant and defend from all Challenge, Claim, Molestation or Trouble whatever. In Testimony whereof they, ye said Dudley, Tileton and How have sett to their hands and seals this 20th Day of July, 1721, and in ye seventh year of King George's Reign.

WILLIAM DUDLEY and a seal,  
 THOMAS TILETON and a seal,  
 THOMAS HOW and a seal.

Signed, Sealed and Delivered in presence of

ISAAC NEWHALL

NATHANIEL HOLBROOK, Suffolk, ss.

Ye within mentioned William Dudley, Thomas Tileton and Thomas How now appearing before me, ye subscriber, and did

acknowledge this instrument as their act and deed. Roxbury, 19 March, 1732.

ELIJAH DANFORTH,

*Justice of Peace.*

Ye aforegoing is a true Copy of ye original Deed recorded Dec. 1732. Examined by

JOHN CHANDLER, JR.,

*Register.*

The price paid for the land was less than twenty cents per acre.

### **Samuel Bemis in His Own Home.**

Samuel Bemis at the age of 33 is now located on his own land and in his own cabin, with his wife aged twenty-seven, Samuel aged three and Edmond aged one year. His daily life is made up of one ceaseless round of thinking, planning and working out the problems that confront him. His intercourse with the world is small. The Wood family doubtless come to his cabin after a day's work is finished in order to relieve the monotony of pioneer life, to hold communion with kindred minds and to continue practice in the art of conversation. Occasionally travelers stop to get a midday meal or else supper, lodging and breakfast. From them he gathers information from the coast or from the more remote settlements in the interior. When the traveler proves to be an interesting talker it is a treat for the household to sit and listen as he narrates his experiences or tells the news he has gathered on his journey and oftentimes it is past midnight, perhaps, before thought of retiring becomes definitely fixed. The Indians also call as they follow their trail up and down the Seven Mile river that flows past his door, and claim the white man a brother whose duty it is to give them food and shelter.

### **The Indians Make Themselves at Home in His Cabin.**

The duty is not acknowledged by Samuel Bemis, at least not without mental reservation, but they are fed just the same and when night comes roll themselves up in blankets, should the weather be cold, and stretching at full length on the kitchen floor with their feet toward the fire, soon fall asleep. This arrangement was not agreeable to the host, but being a man of prudence and tact as well, he outwardly submits to conditions he is powerless to avert, and continues to entertain the red men in his home, to which they have not been invited. With such conditions as these prevailing, an unusual event in the family life of Samuel Bemis occurred the year following his settlement at Leicester. We will let Draper's History tell the story: "In 1722, when his wife was about to give birth to her third son, William, fearing the Indians, she made a journey to Sudbury for safety during that

critical period, and when her little son was only two weeks old, she rode home on horseback, a distance of nearly fifty miles, in one day and carried the infant in her arms, although for a greater part of the distance the road, such as it was, passed through an entire wilderness." It is no wonder then, that a woman having so great powers of endurance as she evidently possessed should have given birth to a race of stalwart men and women such as we find to have been the case. There is one expression in the above narrative



FOSTER BEMIS.

Great grandson of Samuel Bemis, Sr., and the last Bemis to till the old farm which had descended from Samuel Sr., Joshua Sr., and Amasa to Foster. In 1855 he sold the farm and went West. Born in Spencer, Jan'y 10, 1808; died at Beloit, Wis., Dec. 6, 1881, "respected by all who knew him."

that will not likely be sufficiently clear to the general reader, and that is "fearing the Indians."

### **Fears the Indians.**

Why should she fear the Indians? Let us find out if we can the real cause. Years before this time a majority of the males of the different tribes of Indians in New England had either been slain or else had been so completely subdued that they

feared to again make war on the white men, knowing full well from the past that swift retribution would follow, with their lives as a forfeit. But there were a few Indians, supposed to have been mostly old men, who remembering with humiliation the victories of the white men, and, defying their power, still thirsted for revenge. These, owing allegiance to no tribe, in small bands roved at will about the country protected by the forests which everywhere abounded, and which under cover



LEWIS BEMIS,

Great grandson of Samuel Bemis, Sr. He was a farmer, merchant and powder manufacturer. Built in 1843 the house where Abraham Capen now lives. Served the town as representative, town clerk and treasurer. Born in Spencer, Nov. 5, 1797; died in Spencer, Nov. 8, 1856.

of their branches permitted them to approach their intended victims unawares. It was doubtless in this way that Widow Mary McIntosh was fired upon and killed at Brookfield while milking her cows, August 2, 1706, and also one Judah Trumble, killed there about the same date. "Oct. 13, 1708, in the same town, John Wolcott, a lad of about thirteen years, was riding early in the morning in search of the cows when Indians fired at him, killing his horse and taking him prisoner. Six men from Jennings' garri-

son, hearing the firing and thinking it proceeded from Banister's garrison, hastened to the latter place, but were waylaid by the Indians, when Abijah Bartlett was killed and three others wounded."

### Indians Kill White Men at Brookfield

"In 1709, Robert Granger and John Clary were passing along a road, in Brookfield, and being fired upon by the Indians, Granger was killed on the spot. Clary attempted to escape but was soon shot down." July 22, 1710, six men were making



WILLIAM BEMIS, SR. HOUSE.

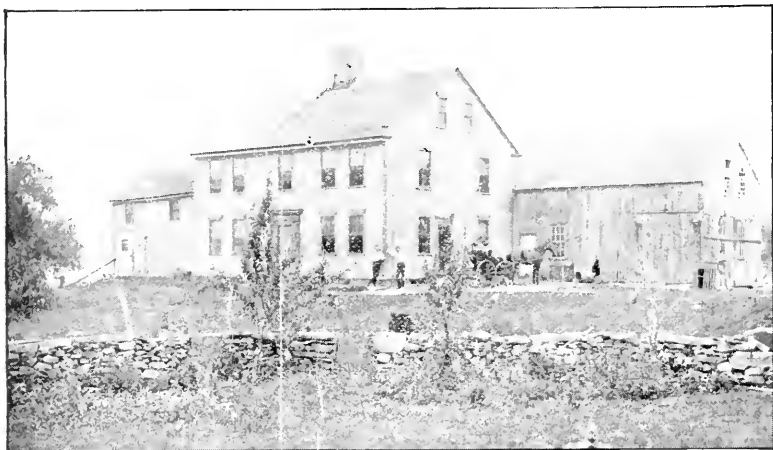
The original house built by William Bemis, Senior, son of Samuel Bemis, Senior, on the east end of lot 15, in 1746. The outside has been recovered, kept in good repair and looks like a modern house. Now owned by Jeremiah Kane.

hay in the meadows at Brookfield, when the Indians sprang suddenly upon them and all were slain. Such facts as these, happening so short a distance away from the Bemis homestead and relatively in so recent a period of time, would naturally arouse the fears of a wise and prudent woman and cause her to plan in every way to make life as secure from danger as possible. But there were other factors in the case. Strange Indians had been seen prowling about the frontier settlements, and although no man knew their purpose, it was readily divined that their mission was not one of peace, and while no overt act against the whites occurred until eight months after Mrs. Bemis returned from Sud-

bury, yet what then happened showed that the settlers had accurately prejudged the intent of their enemy, as will be seen by the following :

### **Gray Lock the Famous Indian Chieftain.**

In an account by Francis E. Blake, in the History of Rutland, he says : "On the 13th of August, 1723, Gray Lock, an old chief of the Waranokes, whose hiding place during the early summer had been unknown, with four other Indians approached the town of Northfield, and there waylaying two of its prominent men, killed them on the spot, and long before the inhabitants could

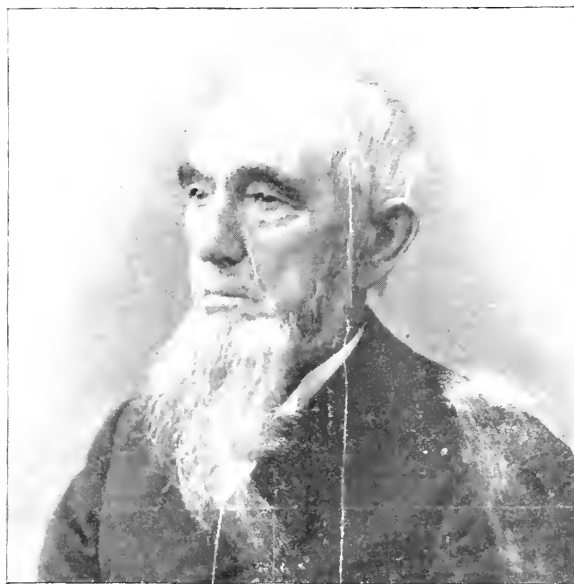


THE JONAS BEMIS, SR., PLACE.

in the south part of Spencer, and where he settled about 1758 after his return from the war with France. This is not the original house, but superseded that structure, and is known to have been erected prior to 1768. Lieut. Bemis is supposed to have been the heaviest man that ever lived in Spencer, weighing, it is said, over 400 pounds. This is also where Jonas Bemis, Jr. lived, familiarly known in his later years as "Old Squire Jonas" from his having a commission as Justice of the Peace. He died in 1819, aged 87. This was also the residence of Alpha, son of Jonas, Jr. In 1873, in Spencer, there was what was called "a smallpox epidemic," and this house was taken by the authorities and made into a hospital for patients having that disease. Dr. C. A. Bemis was placed in charge as superintendent with a salary at the rate of \$1000 per year, he agreeing to supply medicines and pay small incidental expenses. Before the Spring of 1871, the patients had all been discharged and the dwelling ever since has been distinguished as the "Pock House."

organize a force for pursuit, they were far beyond reach on their way to the exposed settlement of Rutland. Hovering about the town, easily concealed by the woods with which they were doubtless familiar, they awaited an opportunity to wreak their vengeance upon some of the innocent people there. The succeeding day, the 14th of August, Deacon Joseph Stevens, was at work

alone in a meadow a half mile northeast of the meeting house. Four of his sons, leaving their home upon the hill, went down into the meadow to join their father, when they were suddenly surrounded by the five Indians who quickly with their blows killing two, Samuel and Joseph, seized the others, Phineas and Isaac, and held them captives. The father heard their cries and saw the fearful deed but knowing he was utterly powerless to cope with the savages, escaped to the neighboring bushes and subsequently



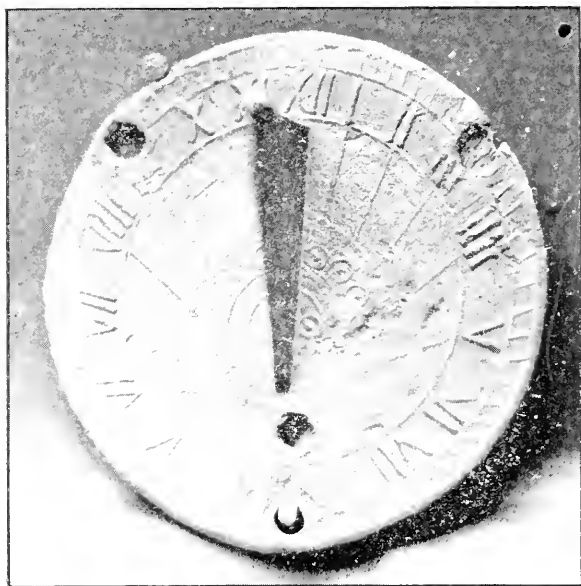
DAVID BEMIS.

son of William Bemis Jr. and great grandson of Samuel Bemis Sr.,  
born in Spencer, Aug. 3, 1812; died in Spencer, Jan. 24, 1890;  
thirty-six years an assessor for the town of Spencer, a  
longer service in one office than has been attained  
by any other citizen in the town's history.

to his home. Three of the Indians guarded the two boys while two passing on laid in wait for Simeon Davis and his son who were at work in a meadow near by, unconscious of the impending danger. Mr. Davis, however, prevented the accomplishment of the plan by fortunately returning home by another path and the Indians, thwarted in their designs, moved onward to join their companions and while in sight of them, came upon Rev. Mr. Willard, the minister of the town, who with his gun had been hunting game."

### Rev. Mr. Willard's Fight for Life.

"Both of the Indians fired upon him but did no harm while he returned the fire, severely wounding one of them. The other sprang upon him and the two closed together, fought for the mastery, and when the valor and strength of the minister seemed about to overcome the savage, the three other Indians, running to the spot, quickly overpowered him and took his life. The only witness to tell of this deed in after years, Phineas Stevens, testified



SUN DIAL.

This sun dial bears the marks of age, but how old it is no one knows. It was donated to the public museum by George Bemis of South Spencer, now living, over eighty years of age, who says it came from his grandfather Nathaniel's estate, and he thinks it originally belonged to Samuel Bemis, Senior.

to the brave resistance and the manliness of Mr. Willard in his struggle for life."

### Brave Woman at Oxford.

"In Oxford on the 6th of August, 1724, four Indians came upon a small house built under a hill. They made a breach in the roof and as one of them was attempting to enter he received a shot in the abdomen from a courageous woman, the only person in the house, who had two muskets and two pistols, and was preparing for all four but they thought fit to retreat, carrying off the dead or wounded man."—*Rutland History*.



### Scouts Posted at Leicester.

It was, indeed, a time of peril. In 1722 the town of Leicester applied to the Governor of the Massachusetts Colony to have scouts posted there through fear of the Indians and the petition was granted, and in 1724, twenty-nine soldiers were assigned to duty there scouting on the outskirts of the settled portion of the town and guarding the farmer as he tilled his fields, or toiled in



THE BEMIS ELM.

Now standing across the highway, south of Bemis Memorial Park. Before the Bemis family abandoned the home farm it was customary to raise for market about a hundred turkeys a year, and this tree was their roosting place.

his meadows. The uncertainty of life, continually exposed to Indian assaults, still agitating the people of Leicester, in 1726 they caused a garrison to be built around the house of their minister, Rev. David Parsons, near the present Congregational church

at a cost of 11lbs. 10s. 5d., but Leicester was fortunate in never having to use the garrison for its intended purpose, and in never having, so far as known, a white man slain within her borders by the Indians.

### Scouts at Brookfield

In 1725 scouts were posted at Brookfield, and the following is a partial report of service performed :

March 18-19, guarded the people fencing their meadows.

April 1, guarded the people at the corn mill.

April 26, guarded the people to plow.

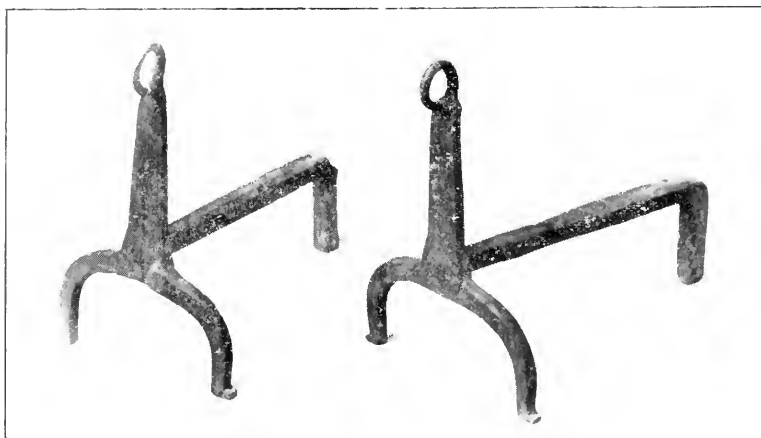
May 4-13, guarded the people to plant.

May 10, scouted, discovered Indian tracks by Ware river.

May 29, scouted the swamps in pursuit of the Indians.

July 10, guarded 23 men at work in the meadow making hay.

It was not, however, for other reasons always agreeable for the settlers to live in the wilderness apart from their fel-



A PAIR OF ANDIRONS.

These old Andirons were dug up by Mr. Charles A. Boyc'en in 1880 from the cellar of the first frame house erected in Spencer by Samuel Bemis in 1726. Their design is one of the earliest, and as they were made by hand it appears probable they were used in the old house. They are now in the possession of Dr. A. A. Bemis.

low-men, isolated from the home of their childhood, the associations of their youth, the presence of their kindred and surrounded by all the dangers of frontier life, and we get now and then glimpses as to how some of these early pioneers felt along these lines when they gave utterance to their feel-

ings. It is fair to assume that the following experience of Ephraim Curtis, the first settler in Worcester, and great-great-grandfather of Judge Albert W. Curtis of this town, was but the record of a feeling common among the early pioneers. The history says he "left Sudbury with a pack on his back, a light, long Spanish gun on his shoulder, and an axe in his hand, and set his face toward Worcester.

### **Early Settler Sheds Tears.**

"This was in the fall of 1673. He settled near Lincoln street at a place called by the Indians Quinsigamug. Here he was all alone in the wilderness for a year or more, and in subsequent times used to tell how, after working all day, he would sit down and look toward Sudbury and shed tears in spite of himself."

Another writer of those times, evidently one who at a previous date had enjoyed the social life of some hamlet, now relates a wilderness experience in the language of one who is heartbroken and homesick. The person says:

### **A Howling Wilderness.**

"A howling wilderness it was, exposed day and night, whether in hut or field, to the wily and cruel Indian, the lurking and ravenous bear or wolf. A howling wilderness it was, where no man dwelt—the hideous yells of wolves, the shrieks of owls, the gobbling of turkeys, and barking of foxes, was all the music we enjoyed—no friends to visit, no soul in the surrounding towns; all a dreary waste and exposed to a thousand difficulties; no roads, no mills, no schools or sanctuary."

Isolation, however, and disquieting noises in the night were not all the trials of the settler. The wolf was a constant menace. It is recorded that in 1723, at Ipswich, the birthplace of Nathaniel Wood, "wolves were so abundant and so near the meeting house that parents would not suffer their children to go and come from worship without some grown person. It was a common thing to hear them commence their howl soon after sunset, when it was very dangerous to go near the woods." It was also said that "all the young settlements were harassed by the incursions of troops of wolves."

### **The Troublesome Wolf.**

At Worcester in 1733, it is recorded that "so great was the injury done by these marauders that the price of heads was raised to eight pounds. The precipitous cliff still called Rattlesnake Rocks was the favorite resort of wolves, bears, wild cats and ser-

pents, rendering the steep dangerous to man." In 1734 the record says that "notwithstanding the law of the province giving encouragement for the destruction of wolves, they still continue very troublesome and mischievous, especially among young cattle and sheep whereby people are discouraged from keeping sheep so necessary for clothing." It is presumable that Samuel Bemis from his remote location was particularly well situated to invite the depredations of these wild animals. It may be well here to note other conditions prevailing at that time.

### The Highways Intolerable.

Draper's history says that as late as 1788, "the highways were intolerable, the Great Post road by far the best in the country, and which has since received so many straightenings and levelings, was then so rough and hilly that it was only competent for a



POWDER HORN.

Powder Horn carried by Capt. Edmond Bemis throughout his service in the Colonial Wars. It was inherited by his son, Joseph, and by Joseph's sons, Sylvanus and John, by whom it was presented to the Spencer Museum, through Wm. M. Wakefield, who cared for them in their old age.

team of four horses to transport the weight of one ton to Boston and return with the same weight in one week. The chief instruments in repairing the roads were the cart and the iron bar. The plough was then never used for that purpose, and what rocks could not be removed with iron bars alone, stood their ground in whatever part of the road they happened to be located, bidding defiance to the horses' hoofs or the wheels of the carriages, for the use of gunpowder in removing rocks was then unpracticed and hardly known."

### Brookfield Petitions for Good Roads.

At an earlier date the citizens of Brookfield had sent to "His Excellency Richard Earl of Belmont," for a sum of money wherewith to repair that part of the Bay Path road between Brookfield and Worcester, and which went by way of Charlton and

Oxford. While this road did not go through any part of Leicester this document represents the general state of the highways at that time. This is the petition :

Wee the subscribers being verry senceable of the inconveniencies that may happen in as much as the stated Road to Conitticot especially Betwixt Wooster & Brookfield is verry much incumbered with Trees fallen & many Rocky Swamps & other impassable Obstructions to Travellers, Drovers, and others, & hazzarding life or limb of both men and Horses & other Creatures to great Losses & Damages, Humbly propose that there bee a Suteable allowance Granted to repairs & amend said Road, at least to the sum of — pounds, Out of the Publique Treasurie of this Province, which we Humbly leave to consideration, & Subscribe

JOHN PYNCHON,  
SAML. PARTRIGG,  
JOHN CLARKE,  
ISAAC PHELPS,  
SAML. MARSH.

Brookfield, May 29, 1700.

"The General Court voted the sum of 5 lbs. for mending the road aforesaid, where it is needed." This was about \$1.50 per mile, but then those were truly days of "small things."

### **A New England Town in 1719.**

Let us now get the picture of a New England village as it appeared at the time of the advent of Samuel Bemis into Leicester and we shall then, bearing in mind what has preceded, have a fairly complete idea of the appearance of the country, his environment and the conditions under which he was obliged to labor. The following description of Worcester in 1719 is taken from Lincoln's History: "There were 58 dwellings here at that time and about 200 persons. Tradition says they were humble edifices, principally of logs, one story high, and with ample stone chimneys. Some were furnished with windows of diamond glass where the resources of the proprietor afforded means for procuring such a luxury. The light was admitted in many through the dim transparency of oiled paper."

### **Houses Have Plank Doors.**

From other sources it is learned that the doors to the houses were made of planks in the most substantial way, nailed together with wrought iron nails and securely clinched. The windows were strongly made and opened outwardly, while inside, as a further protection, were heavy wooden shutters.

After 1722 we learn but little more of Samuel Bemis until the summer of 1726, the year he built the first framed house in what is now Spencer. This building was two stories in height

and covered 800 square feet of ground. This is learned from a description given by the assessors in 1798, when they report as above and add that the house contains eleven windows and sixty-seven square feet of glass. This would give an average of six square feet to a window, or about one half the usual size of windows at the present time. This house was taken down about 1845 or within the memory of many now living. It was no small undertaking at that time and place to build a house of that size. Housewrights, as carpenters were called in those days, were not plentiful, John Stebbins of Leicester hill, being the principal one then in the town. It may have been that the father-in-law of Samuel Bemis, John Barnard of Sudbury, a housewright, superintended its construction. All the timber must needs be cut, lined, scored and hewed.

### **Framing a New House for Samuel Bemis.**

The present method of framing was unknown. Each stick was in turn made to fit into its place in another stick by a process known as the scribe rule, that is the whole frame had to be put together on the ground, one section at a time, each tenon and mortise made the complement of each other and then taken apart and laid away until the time of raising. And then, when the frame was all ready, a bee was ordered and all the men in the country around were invited to attend and help raise the building. At that time there were to be had in country places no ropes and tackle—nothing but the muscle of hardy yeomen was available. Every man came who could. To go to a raising was to have a holiday of the most pleasant character and so we may suppose the neighbors of Samuel Bemis in Brookfield and Leicester turned out in force on the morning of some fair day in 1726, and before the sun went down had made him the happy possessor of the skeleton of a house of his choice, strongly and securely erected and ready for its outside covering. When completed, into this house he moved and here spent the days of his vigorous manhood and at last when enfeebled by age bid adieu to the scenes of earth.

### **Why Seven Mile River Was so Named.**

The Seven Mile river in Leicester and the Five Mile river in Brookfield were so designated by the early settlers on Foster Hill, in Brookfield, to denote the distance from their settlement to the fording places where these streams crossed the Boston trail. In 1725 the town of Leicester was complained of at the Quarterly Session of the Worcester Court, and under a law then in force

fined for failing to provide a bridge at the junction of the Seven Mile river with the "Country Road" near the house of Samuel Bemis. This protest, though an expense to Leicester, did not bear immediate results, and in 1728 the town was again fined, with total costs amounting to about seventy-five dollars, and this time was aroused to action. There was a town meeting legally convened, March 5, 1728, "to see what steps and methods the town will take to answer the presentment at the Quarter Sessions for not erecting a bridge over the Seven Mile river. Voted that Lieut. Thomas Newhal and Mr. Josiah Converse do answer the presentment at the Quarter Sessions in behalf of the town for not building the bridge over Seven Mile river."

### **First Bridge Over Seven Mile River.**

The money was raised for the bridge and it was completed the year following, but the structure appears to have been a crude attempt at bridge building, and was probably built low down near to the stream and only wide enough for the passage of a single team. Owing, probably, to the superficial character of the structure we find the town, Nov. 2, 1741, considering the question whether it would be better to repair the old bridge or build a new one as we learn from the following record:

Att a meeting of the freeholders and other inhabitants of ye town of Leicester, Leagally convened upon Monday, the second day of November, 1741, that whare as the sum granted by this town for the repairing the highways in this town prove in sufficient and more particularly in the western part of said town there being so much wanting to be done either in repairing the bridge over Seven Milde River or to build a new Bridg over said river this is therefore to see if ye town will grant a sutable sum of money to repare or build said Bridge or what may be nessarey for any other part of said town as also to see what the town will alow to each man for a days work at said bridge as also for cart and oxen and put ye care there of into ye hands of a sutable committee or other ways to see what ye town will do in the affare a Bove mentioned. Voted that ye sum of eight shillings be a lowed to each man for a days work at ye above said Bridg at the Discretion of the Committe and the sum of five shillings a day for a pair of oxen and the sum of three shillings a day for a cart in the business a Bove said

### **Samuel Bemis Directs Sixty-five Men at Bridge Building.**

The town voted the money needed and this time a substantial structure was erected, occupying about two weeks' time, with Samuel Bemis apparently superintendent of the work. No man before or since probably had such an array of help at the building of a wooden bridge in town as Mr. Bemis directed on this occasion, no less than sixty-five different men being employed

during its construction, as will be seen by the following document recorded in 1742:

Mr. William Green,

Treasurer of the town of Leicester,

Sir—Where as the inhabitants of this town at a meeting Regularly convened, voted to raise the sum of sixty pounds to build a Bridge over Seven Mile River in this town and the same have bin assessed on the Inhabitants and Delivered to the last year's Constables, viz: John Crowl and patrick Watson, and the several persons which are here under written working in Building the Bridge the sum affixed against his name all which sums so affixed you are desired to pay to the several persons here under named and the same shall be allowed to you.

JOHN LYND,  
JOHN WHITTEMOR,  
JOSHUA NICKOLS,  
LUK LINCOLN,  
BENJAMIN TUCKER,

*Selectmen of Leicester.*

	L.	s.	d.		L.	s.	d.
Benj. Woodart,		16		Josamiah How,		8	
David Earl,		8		Henry White,		8	
Jacob Briant,		8		John Orms,	1	4	
Edward East,		8		Thomas Graton,		16	
Robert Griffin,	1	9		John Stebbins,		8	
Daniel Denny,	2	10	6	Samuel Bemis, Jr,	1	4	
James Southgate,	1	6		Thos. Richardson,	1	12	
John Scott,	1	12		Ichabod Merrit,	1	4	
John Whittemor,	1	4		Edward Bond,		8	
Daniel Snow,		16		Robert Woodart,		8	
James Smith,		8		Oliver Witt,		8	
frances how,		8		William Green Jr,		8	
John Graton,		13		Joseph Tompson,	1	4	
William Wickor,		8		John Reed,	1	4	
Jonathan Sargent,	1	4		hugh Cunningham,		8	
Rich'd Southgate, Jr.		8		patrick Watson,	1	17	
William Sinkley,		8		Rich'd Southgate,	1	6	
Benjamin Johnson,	2	8		John Lynd,	1	17	
Nathaniel Green,		16		Thomas Lowden,		16	
Joseph Shaw,		8		Joshua Nickols,	1	6	
Benj Bond,		8		John Lynd, Jr,		8	
Thomas Smith,		8		John Sanderson,		16	
Joseph Trumbel,		8		phinee Newton,		8	
William Earl,		8		Jonas Livermor,		8	
Samuel Tucker,		16		William Thompson,		8	
John Potter,		8		Samuel Bemis,	5	12	
Archabel Lamond,		8		David Adams,		15	6
Samuel Brown,	1	14		Joshua Whitney,		8	
Thomas Steel,	1	4		William Green,	2	18	
peter Silvester,	1	12		Jonathan Lamb,	1	14	
Israel Parsons,	2	12		Jacob Shaw,		8	
Jonathan Newhall,	1	6		Samuel Barns,		13	
Daniel Lynd,		16		John Converse,	1	6	



At a town meeting held March 15, 1742, Art. 5, was as follows :

To see if the town a low ye Coumpts of the Committe that was impowered to Build a Bridg over Seven Mile River in this town as allso to see if they will make sum a lowance to Mr. Samuel Bemis for timber cut in his land to Build said Bridg with and grant money to pay ye same. Voted to allow ye account of the Comity in holl that was chosen to build ye Bridg over seven mile river. Voted that ye sum of 16lb 11s 6d be granted and assessed to defray ye charge of building ye bridge over seven Mild river.

The sides to the bridge, however, were open and so remained for fifty-seven years, when at a town meeting held May 14, 1798, it was "voted to repair the Bridge near Amasa Bemis' house, and to have rails both sides of the Bridge and causeway."



SEVEN MILE RIVER BRIDGE.

The famous Seven Mile River Bridge, near the original homestead of Samuel Bemis. The center of the old fordway was about ten feet from the north, or opposite side of the bridge as shown in the engraving.

### Church Relations in Leicester and Spencer.

While Samuel Bemis appears never to have been a communicant of the church, his relations thereto and to the parish with which he was connected, seem to have been of a most cordial character. In 1733, we find him paying for the support of the Leicester church 2lbs. 1s. 8d., or the most of any man in a list of thirty-eight tax payers, except John



CHLOE BEMIS.

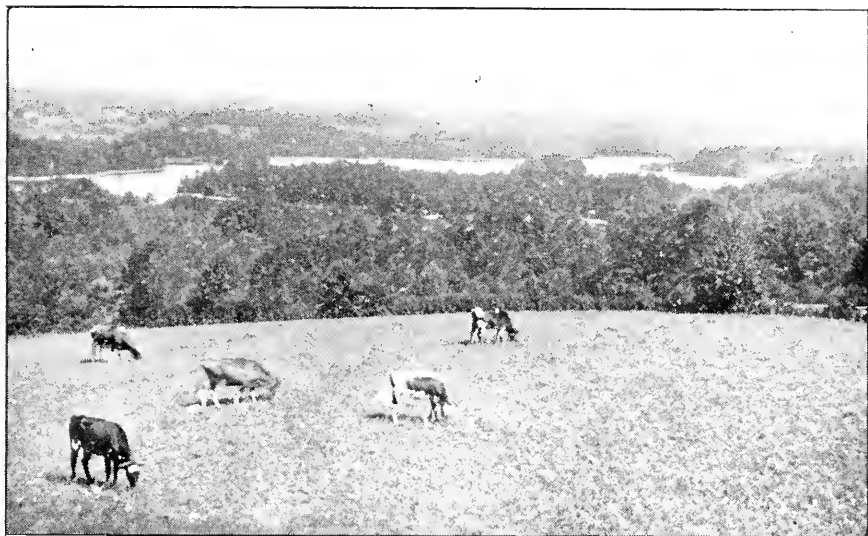
daughter of Joshua Bemis Jr., and great granddaughter of Samuel Bemis Sr. Born in Spencer, April 1, 1820, now living Married Lorenzo O. Livermore in May, 1840, better known by the name of Lory. Their children were; Walton Livermore and Mrs. Frances Livermore Stone, now living in Spencer, and Rev. Albert Livermore of Montour Falls, New York.

Lynd, who paid 2lbs. 11s. 7d. In 1734, out of a list of seventy-five persons taxed, he paid 1lb. 19s. 1d., which amount was exceeded by only four persons. In 1735, he paid for mending glass in the meeting house 6s. 6d. For entertaining council 16s. 6d. For Rev. David Parsons settlement 1s. 10d. For paying Rev. Mr. Goddard's arrears, and Dea. James Southgate for entertaining Mr. Goddard and "sum other ministers in ye year," 1lb. 6s. 4d.

Only two others out of a list of ninety-four who were assessed, paid as large a tax. In 1736 he paid toward Rev. Mr. Goddard's salary 2lbs. 11s. 10d., which amount was exceeded by only two persons: Jacob Lawton, who paid 3lbs. 8s. 10d. and John Lynd, who paid 3lbs. 5s. 3d.

### Rev. David Parsons Sues the Town

In 1737, the Rev. David Parsons sued the town for arrearage in salary, won his suit, and to help liquidate this debt Samuel Bemis paid 2lbs. 16s. 5d., and these sums fairly represent his annual payments in support of the gospel. "As early



SPENCER SCENERY.

Overlooking beautiful Brooks Pond with its many islands, from summer residence of Dr. A. A. Bemis.

as April 2, 1739, Samuel Bemis and John Stebbins, in behalf of other settlers, met the proprietors at Boston to see about support of a minister of the gospel," and later "Samuel Bemis and Johnathan Lamb were chosen assessors to levy a tax to support the preacher.—*Draper*, p. 87.

In 1744, when the western half of Leicester had been erected into a precinct which was July 18th of that year, a parish meeting was held Sept. 10th, at which it was voted that Mr. Samuel Bemis, John Newhall and Mr. James Wilson be the assessors. Also voted that Samuel Bemis, John Cunningham, Johnathan Lamb, John

Stebbins and James Wilson be a committee for calling general meetings. On the same date and on the town's book of records the following statement is made :

### An Unusual Document

We, whose names are hereunto subscribed do for ourselves and ours, hereby declare ourselves fully satisfied on the account of any charge or charges that we have been at of any public nature or degree whatsoever for this society from the beginning of the world to this day as witness our hands

*Samuell Bemis*

JOHN ORMES,  
JOHNATHAN LAMB,  
JOHN STEBBINS,  
HIS  
WILLIAM X SINKLER,  
MARK  
JAMES WILSON,  
JOHN CUNNINGHAM,  
JOSHUA BARROW,  
SAMUEL BEMIS, JR.,  
DAVID ALEN,  
JOHN NEWHAL,  
MOSES SMITH,  
JOSIAH ROBINSON.

Sept. 30, 1744, the committee called the freemen "to meet at the meeting house in said parish in respect of their choosing Mr. Joshua Eaton to be their gospel minister and also in respect to his settlement and salary and also to receive Mr. Eaton's answer to settle amongst us," which he had been invited to do at a previous meeting. It appears that Mr. Eaton gave a favorable response to their invitation for at the same meeting it was voted that James Wilson, Samuel Bemis, Johnathan Lamb and John Stebbins be a committee to provide for the ordination, which took place November 7th. At a parish meeting, Dec. 24, 1744 "to see about building seats in the meeting house" it was voted that Samuel Bemis, Johnathan Lamb, James Wilson, Johnathan Ormes, John Stebbins, Moses Smith and Joshua Barton be a committee to build the body of the seats and to mark out and set a price on the pwe spots." "Voted that Mr. Samuel Bemis shall have the pwe spot on the right hand side of the coming of the south door, prize 5lbs., the highest cost of all." "Voted, tenthly that Mr. Samuel Bemis, Jr., have the pwe spot at the left hand side of the coming

in of the east door in case that he provides the whole of the wading Stuf for the Bodey of the Seets."

At a meeting held March 29, 1745 "voted eighthly that Deacon Willson, Mr. Samuel Bemis and Left. Lamb be a comety for to divide the ministerial and school lot."

On November 25, 1745, the parish "voted that Johnathan Lamb, Samuel Bemis and James Wilson be a comety to rickon and setal accounts with Mr. Eaton."

At a meeting held on "Mundy, March 14, 1749," it was voted "to raise fifty pounds Old Tenor to pay Mr. Samuel Bennis' account he hath against ye Parish."



DRIVE THROUGH SPENCER PUBLIC PARK.

The only town offices to which he was elected, thus far found recorded, are those of constable and "Sarvayour of ye Hiways," but his posterity have been honored with town office beyond that of any other Spencer family.

His interest in schools cannot be determined except from the fact that he appears to have paid his school tax whenever there was an assessment and never asked for any abatement. He also took the schoolmaster into his family circle in the days when boarding around was in vogue, and at another time to have boarded him continuously throughout one-half a probable term of eight weeks, as by the town record of March 3, 1746, when it was

"voted to a low to Samuel Bemis the sum of four pounds eight shillings old tenor for Bording our schoolmaster, Adam Boolard one month & keeping his horse one month."

It will thus be seen from the preceding records that Samuel Bemis in his prime was active in promoting the religious interests of the town and served on many important parish committees, but neither the anathemas of Rev. David Parsons nor the tears and tender entreaties of Rev. Joshua Eaton prevailed upon him to become a communicant of the church he in so many ways fostered. He was now nearing sixty years of age; his sons had grown to manhood, married and settled around him and from now on he appears to have gradually relinquished cares of a public nature. On March 4, 1764, at the age of seventy-two he ceases to be the manager of his farm, one hundred acres of which, with "a mansion house and barn thereon where I now live," he deeds to his son Joshua.

### **Samuel Bemis in His Old Age.**

He has lived to see the town of his choice gradually develop into a thriving settlement, and his voice and deeds have been potent in shaping its destiny. He has lived to see two of his sons march away to the French and Indian Wars, and come home laden with honors, uncontaminated with the vices of the camp. He has seen his grandchildren multiply until it seems probable that he may have been unable readily to have called them all by name, and now as he is nearing the close of life he sees, on the 20th of April, 1775, his son Jonas and six of his grandsons march as minutemen for the defence of the colonies. The Brookfield Rangers, in which company his son Jonas was a lieutenant, must needs pass his door, and whether the time was midday or midnight, no doubt he was in readiness to see the men march by to the music of the fife and drum, and waving his hand bid them God speed as they pressed on and out of sight on their way to Cambridge. But from now on, being old and feeble, his days fly swiftly by and in 1776, at the age of eighty-four, he is laid away by the side of the wife of his youth in the old churchyard on the hill, having completed his life work and won the respect and esteem of his fellow-citizens.

### **Sarah Barnard's Ancestry.**

His wife, Sarah Barnard, came from English ancestry. She was born at Watertown, January 25, 1694, and died at Spencer, September 30, 1755, preceding him twenty years. Her father, grandfather and great grandfather Barnard were named John. John Barnard Senior, born in 1602, came to America from Ipswich, England, in the ship Elizabeth, William Andrews master, in 1634 with his wife Phebe and their son John, aged three, and

settled at Ipswich in this State. Her father was a housewright and lived at Watertown, and his surname, Barnard, has to some extent been used in Spencer as a given name in the Bemis and other families.

The names of the children of Samuel Bemis and wife were as follows :

Where born.	Name.	Date.	Where died.	Date.	Age.
Watertown	Samuel	May, —, 1716	Spencer	Aug. 15, 1793	77
"	Edmund	Nov. 1, 1720	"	Dec. —, 1810	90
Sudbury	William	Nov. 1, 1722	"	Mar. 23, 1801	78
Spencer	Nathaniel	—, 1725	"	Jan. —, 1784	61
"	Sarah	Dec. 12, 1727	"	—, —	—
"	Joshua	July 14, 1729	"	Mar. 24, 1789	59
"	Elizabeth	—, 1732	"	—, —	—
"	Jonas	Mar. 25, 1737	"	May 7, 1790	53

### Bemis Family as Workers.

The sons all settled in Spencer and their average ages at death was the psalmist's allotted length, three score years and ten. They were all farmers, men of action and property, who from morning till evening, we conclude, or from sun to sun, which was in those times the working day, felled the forests, dug out the stumps, cleared the fields of rocks, built rail and stone fences, reclaimed the swamps, dug ditches, built roads and such other pioneer work as was needed to be done in addition to tilling the soil and caring for their stock. Surely there was no lack of work in those days, and while there was not much money in circulation, the people all managed to be comfortably fed, clothed and housed. It was while these men were living that roads actually begun to be made, since for the first thirty years after the settlement of the town there were no roads except the "Country Road," nothing but cart paths from house to house.

### Bemis Family at Road Building.

The first road laid out by competent authority was in 1750, but from the beginning of road making in Spencer as our records will show, up to the year 1901 under the administration of Lewis D. Bemis, road commissioner, the Bemis family have had a great proclivity for road making, and it is safe to say that of the one hundred miles of roads in town, adding thereto twenty-five miles of roads abandoned, there is hardly a rod on which at one time or another some Bemis has not worked. In one year there were four highway surveyors of the Bemis name.

The son of Samuel, who became the most distinguished, was Captain Edmund, and after him Corporal Jonas, both from service in the Colonial Wars. The following obituary notice originally appeared in the Massachusetts Spy of December 26, 1810, but is now reproduced from Draper's History of 1841.



BEMIS HILL.

Looking toward the west from the Nathan Bemis, Jr. place. Sannel Bemis settled at the foot of this hill and the location was near the center of the picture, the present site of Bemis Memorial Park. (Photographed by Geo. A. Craig, B.S.)



### **Captain Edmund Bemis.**

“Died in Spencer, Captain Edmund Bemis, aged 90 years. There are some things worthy of record in the life of this aged and war worn veteran. His father was the first settler in Spencer, having removed from Sudbury, to this town, about the time of the birth of this son, that is, about 1720. This son Edmund has been very remarkable for his habits of honesty, industry and temperance, which have produced a long life of health and happiness. He early entered into the service of his country, and was a Lieutenant at the reduction of Louisburgh in the year 1745. At this siege he was a zealous and active officer. After the French had surrendered to the victorious arms of New England, it was found they had spiked their cannon, intending thereby to render them entirely useless to the captors. It had been heretofore deemed an impracticable thing, after a gun was thus spiked, to drill it out, or by any other method whatever, to render it again fit for service. The commander of the American forces, offered a premium to any one who would undertake the task, if he should prove successful.

### **Finds a Way to Utilize Spiked Cannon.**

“Lieutenant Bemis undertook it, and by a process heretofore never thought of, effected the desired object. Instead of drilling, as was supposed to be the only practicable method, he collected a large quantity of wood around the cannon, and setting it on fire, heated them to such a degree that with a cold punch, the spike was easily driven into the barrel. Thus was he the author of a useful discovery to his country, which has ever since been followed with complete success. After the reduction of Louisburgh, he was a Captain in the war with France which succeeded, at the close of which he returned home, to seek that repose among his friends, which he has since enjoyed without interruption.

### **Digs the First Grave in the Old Cemetery.**

“It will perhaps be, worthy of notice, as one singular circumstance, that he dug the grave for the first person in Spencer, upwards of seventy years ago. As he was the first person who prepared a mansion for the dead in this town, so likewise he is the last inhabitant who has removed to those gloomy mansions, between which times, there are supposed to have been not less than twelve hundred persons consigned to the same place, which he first marked out, and of which he has since taken possession.”

The grave alluded to was for Elizabeth Adams, infant child of David Adams, a neighbor who settled in Spencer in 1734. The child was buried in 1742 in what is now known as the old

cemetery where a headstone may be seen erected by some one of a later generation. Nathaniel Cunningham gave the above land to the town in 1740 "for the accommodation of a meeting house and for other parochial and municipal purposes." Before this time interments were made at Leicester.



MOOSE LAKE AND PUBLIC PARK GROVE.

The land comprising Spencer Public Park is in the rear of the late David Bemis' house and was purchased from him and donated to the town by Hon. Luther Hill. The purchase price was \$2,100—of which amount David Bemis discounted \$100 in view of the purpose for which it was to be used.

### **Louisburgh Fortress Strongest in America.**

In order to give a better idea of what was accomplished at Louisburgh, which is on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, the following descriptive matter is added: About 1713 the French began erecting fortifications here, designed to be the strongest in America. The work continued for thirty years and five million dollars was expended on the fortress and armament. The station thus became very important to the naval and fishing interests of France in America and threatened serious loss in time to the English and colonial fisheries. Massachusetts in such a case would have been the chief sufferer among the colonies, and ever alive to her interests, in 1745 while England and France were at war, sent an expedition to attempt the capture of this strong cita-

del. This aggressive movement had been devised by Governor Shirley and sanctioned by the legislature of the colony of Massachusetts Bay. William Pepperell was chosen commander and sailed for Nova Scotia with a hundred vessels under his command, loaded with troops and munitions of war. A landing was effected April 30, and the town and fortress besieged until July 17, when

### French Commander Surrenders

the French commander surrendered, but only after he had caused to be spiked the splendid cannon with which the fort was equipped, and which Lieutenant Edmund Bemis undertook to put in commission again and succeeded. His experience as a blacksmith led him to adopt a practical method. No record has yet been found showing the sum of money offered for the discovery or whether the amount was ever actually paid over to Lieutenant Bemis. It is not improbable, however, that a diligent search among our state archives will yet reveal these points.

Some years after Lieutenant Bemis returned from Louisburgh he was commissioned as a Captain and authorized to recruit a company to march in defence of Crown Point. This he did and the name bestowed on these recruits was Captain Edmund Bemis' Spencer Co., although but few men were from Spencer as will be seen by an inspection of the following muster roll.

A muster roll of the Company, in his Majesty's service under the command of Captain Edmund Bemis, follows :

	Pay per Month.			Town.
	L.	s.	d.	
Edmund Bemis, Captain,	5	8		Spencer
Ephraim Howard, Lieutenant,	3	12		Western
Joseph Hamilton, Ensign,	2	8		Brookfield
Samuel Owen, Sergeant,	1	18		New Salem
Isaac Chadwick, Sergeant,	1	18		Western
Nat. Sargeant, Sergeant,	1	18		Leicester
Elias Bowker, Clerk,	1	18	1	Leicester
John Chamberlain, Corporal,	1	13	6	Stockbridge
Eliphalet Hambelin, Corporal,	1	13	6	Brookfield
Jonas Bemis, Corporal,	1	13	6	Spencer
Israel Richardson, Corporal	1	13	6	Spencer
Thomas Weeks, Drummer,	1	13	6	Brookfield
Deliverance Carpenter, Private,	1	12		Brimfield
Ebenezer Nutting, “	1	12		Brimfield
Robert Morgan, “	1	12		Spencer
Joseph Rutland, “	1	12		Brookfield
Benjamin Wood, “	1	12		“
John Adams, “	1	12		“

		Pay per Month.			Town.
		L.	s.	d.	
Joice Flagg,	Private,	1	12		Brookfield.
Jacob Wood,	"	1	12		"
Ebenezer Davis,	"	1	12		"
Nathan Hamilton,	"	1	12		"
Joseph Wood,	"	1	12		"
Abraham Adams,	"	1	12		"
Edward Ayers,	"	1	12		Ware River
John Trask,	"	1	12		New Salem
Malaah Gardner,	"	1	12		Worcester
John Spencer,	"	1	12		Spencer
John Bowker,	"	1	12		Spencer
Christopher Muggin,	"	1	12		Gore-Died
Thomas Wood,	"	1	12		Western
Roger Brissell,	"	1	12		Western
					[Deserted]
Joseph Worcester,	"	1	12		Spencer
					[Died in Worcester]
James Graiton,	"	1	12		Spencer
James Bacon,	"	1	12		Leicester
Ruben Clark,	"	1	12		Brimfield
John Brightwell,	"	1	12		Brimfield
Timothy Bowen,	"	1	12		Western
Robert Brayford,	"	1	12		Hadley
John Brown,	"	1	12		Swanzy
Oliver Barrett,	"	1	12		Sunderland
Stephen Corben,	"	1	12		Sunderland
William Fisk,	"	1	12		Greenwich
John Gibbs,	"	1	12		Greenwich
Soloman Gibbs,	"	1	12		Greenwich
Samuel Lewis,	"	1	12		Middlebury
John Slaker,	"	1	12		Middlebury
John Vickery,	"	1	12		New Salem
William White,	"	1	12		Greenwich
William Trickery,	"	1	12		Old York

Besides Capt. Edmund, Samuel Bemis was represented in the French and Indian Wars by his youngest son Jonas, whom it appears served the colonies in the same company as his brother Edmund, and had risen to the rank of a sergeant before the close of his service. He then came home, married and settled down to the life of a farmer, but when the news of the Concord fight reached him he promptly took his equipments and as Lieutenant marched with the Brookfield Rangers to the front.

### Effect of the Concord Fight in Spencer.

James Draper in his account of this call to arms says, speaking of the British, "After having a conflict with our troops at Concord they were repulsed and retreated back to Boston with considerable loss. An alarm was immediately spread through the country like an electric shock. The next day great was the commotion among the people. Like the fiery cross of the ancient Scottish clans, a messenger on horseback, with the speed of the



HIRAM HOWE.

Great grandson of Samuel Bemis Sr., brother of the inventors, William and Tyler Howe and uncle of Elias Howe, Jr. He was a man well known in Spencer for seventy years and until laid by with rheumatism was a tireless worker on his farm and about his saw, grist and cider mills. He was known among his town-people as an absolutely honest man who worked incessantly and never found the longest days of June quite long enough in which to accomplish work equal to his ambition. Born January 1808; died September, 1901, aged 93½ years.

wind, passed through the towns from the East shouting from the top of his voice, 'The war has begun, the regulars are marching to Concord.' All business and recreations were immediately suspended. The farmer left his plough in the furrow, the mechanic the tools upon the bench and there was an instantaneous gathering of the people, with stern wills, to do whatever should be necessary to be done to meet the emergency. The Company (Capt.

Ebenezer Mason's) of minute men buckled on their knapsacks, shouldered their muskets and were immediately on the march. And although the time appointed for a town meeting to make provision for the exigency had not yet arrived, the good wives of the soldiers with the assistance of the selectmen of the town furnishing them with a hasty and imperfect supply of clothing and provisions, they marched quickly to Cambridge. Finding the enemy disposed to remain in his stronghold, the town of Boston,



SUMMER RESIDENCE OF DR. A. A. BEMIS, OVERLOOKING BROOKS POND.

forty of them enlisted for eight months to be stationed in the vicinity of Boston and the remainder returned home.' Among the latter was Lieut. Jonas Bemis, after a service of eight days.

### **Record of Spencer for Patriotism Unexcelled.**

But this battle at Concord where was fired "a shot heard round the world" was only the beginning of a long seven years' conflict with England for civil liberty and which called upon all lovers of freedom for the highest manifestations of patriotism. And nobly did Spencer respond—no requisition was made upon her for men, money, food or clothing, but the order was quickly

filled, not grudgingly but willingly, and while the people occupied a humble walk in life compared with the body of men who signed the Declaration of Independence, they had a purpose equally as strong and were united with them, in upholding that compact which they solemnly agreed should be inviolable under the pledge of their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor, and Spencer stood by the sentiment of that agreement without flinching until victory came.

### Samuel Bemis Sends a Full Delegation to the War.

Samuel Bemis was not without representatives in that conflict. There was a full delegation. He had, in the early days of the war, passed on to his reward and his six sons were past military service, but his stalwart grandsons were of the right age for the life of a soldier, and were ready to go to the front and fight when they got there, and they went. All of them that bore the Bemis name, everyone of them that was old enough to bear arms, fourteen of them all told, marched to the front determined to help drive the English army out of the land of their birth, and having that spirit of patriotism burning within them that demanded either victory or death. They reaped victory, but not until they had passed through the hardships of many campaigns, nor until three of their number had suffered the untold misery of a winter at Valley Forge. The names of these worthy representatives of the Bemis family and of the town of Spencer are as follows:

Muster Roll of grandsons of Samuel Bemis who served in the Continental Army:

Age in 1776		
Benjamin	32	} Sons of Samuel Bemis Jr.
Samuel	27	
Reuben	24	
John	27	} Sons of Edmund Bemis
Joseph	26	
Phineas	22	
Eleazer	20	
Jesse	25	} Sons of William Bemis
David	21	
Barnard	19	} Sons of Nathaniel Bemis
Nathaniel	16	
Obadiah	19	} Sons of Jonas Bemis
Jonas Jr.	16	
Amasa	19	} Son of Joshua Bemis



THE OLD BEMIS HOSTELRY.



### **Samuel Bemis' Grandsons at Valley Forge.**

Those who were at Valley Forge were Lieutenant Eleazer Bemis, Sergeant Jonas Bemis Jr. and Obadiah Bemis.

Where shall we go to find a more patriotic family? Surely this is a record that will be difficult to match and one worthy our highest admiration. In order to bring to our minds clearly the trials and suffering of the Continental Army at Valley Forge, the following extracts are taken from Lossings' *Life of Washington*:

"Valley Forge! What thoughts and emotions are awakened at the mention of that name. Sympathy and admiration, pity and love, tears and smiles chase each other in rapid succession, as one in imagination goes over the history of that wintry encampment. Never before was there such an exhibition of the triumph of patriotism over neglect and want; of principle over physical sufferings; of virtue over the pangs of starvation. Those tattered,

---

### **The Old Bemis Hostelry.**

The cut on opposite page shows the "Old Bemis Hostelry" as it appeared up to about 1845. The main buildings at the left were built by Amasa Bemis in 1807, and annexed to an ell connecting with the old house erected by Samuel Bemis about 1726. The date "1807" on the new part was painted in large letters above the front door and on the frieze just under the eaves. The picture was produced from the memories of the late Edwin Bemis, Lorenzo Bemis and Ruel Jones of Spencer and Horace Bemis of New York, who dictated the plan of the buildings to Mrs. Nellie Thayer Bemis in 1886, they being desirous of possessing a picture of the old place as it looked when they were boys. The landscape was sketched directly from nature at the time.

---

half-clad, and bare-foot soldiers, wan with want, taking up their slow march for the wintry forest, leaving their bloody testimonials on every foot of the frozen ground they traversed, furnish one of the sublimest scenes in history. A cloud, black as sackcloth, seems to hang over their fortunes, but through it shoots rays of dazzling brightness. A murmur, like the first cadences of a death-song, heralds their march, but there is an undertone of strange meaning and sublime power, for no outward darkness can quench the light of a great soul, no moans of suffering drown the language of a lofty purpose.

### **Washington Chooses the Site of the Encampment.**

"The encampment at Valley Forge was chosen after much deliberation, and frequent consultations among the officers. Various propositions were made, but to each and all there were many and grave objections. Of course, the first and natural wish was to keep the army in the field; but with such naked troops this would be impossible, and every feeling of humanity in Washing-

ton revolted from making the attempt. But how and where to quarter them seemed equally difficult. It was proposed to retire to the towns in the interior of the state; but to this there was the two-fold objection—that of inflicting the same destitution and suffering on the inhabitants, and of leaving a large extent of country unprotected, with forage and stores in possession of the enemy. To distribute the troops in different sections would render them liable to be cut off in detail. Washington, therefore, determined to take to the woods, near his enemy, and there hut, so that he could both protect the country and his stores, and also be in striking distance in case of need.

“The army commenced its march on the 11th of December, but did not reach the place selected for the encampment till the 19th. In his order of the day, dated December 17th, Washington informed the troops of his decision, and the reasons which urged him to it. He also praised their good conduct during the tedious campaign now closed, declared that it furnished evidence that their cause would finally triumph, even if the colonies were left alone in the struggle, but added that there was every reason to believe that France would soon ally herself openly against England. He promised to share in the hardships, and partake of every inconvenience. The next day had been appointed by Congress as a day of Thanksgiving and praise. The army, therefore, remained quiet in their quarters, and divine service was held in the several corps and brigades, by the chaplains, and hymns of praise and the voice of prayer arose there on the confines of the bleak forest, from men who, to all human appearance, had little to be thankful for except nakedness, famine and frost. The next day the work of hutting commenced. Each regiment was divided

### **The Army Builds Log Cabins.**

into parties of twelve, each party to make its own hut, which was to be of logs, fourteen by sixteen feet on the ground, and six feet and a half high. The sides were to be made tight with clay, and the roof with split slabs, or such material as could be obtained. To stimulate the parties to greater exertion, Washington offered a reward of one dollar to each man of that party which finished its hut in the shortest time and most workmenlike manner. Fearing that there would not be slabs or boards sufficient for roofing, he offered a reward, also, of a hundred dollars to any one who should substitute some other covering, that might be more cheaply and quickly made. In a short time their arms were all stacked, and with their axes and other tools in their hands, this army of eleven thousand men, with the exception of about three thousand who were unfit for duty, was scattered through the woods. The scene they presented was strange and picturesque. There was

not a murmur or complaint, and with laugh and song, and loud hallo, they went about their allotted toil. The forest soon rung with the strokes of the axe, and the rapid and incessant crash of falling trees resounded along the shores of the Schuylkill. Little clearings were rapidly made, the foundations of huts laid, and a vast settlement began to spring up along the valleys and slopes of the hills. But here and there were scattered groups of fifty and hundreds, sitting around huge fires, some of them with scarcely a rag to cover their nakedness, crouching closely to the crackling



WILLIAM HOWE,

Son of Elijah Howe Jr., uncle of Elias Howe Jr., and great grand-son of Samuel Bemis Sr., born in Spencer May 12, 1803. Inventor of the celebrated Howe Truss Bridge.

logs to escape the piercing December blast; others sick and emaciated, gazing listlessly on the flames, their sunken and sallow visages clearly foretelling what would be their fate before the winter now setting in was over. In another direction were seen

### **Men Harnessed Together Draw Logs.**

men harnessed together like beasts of burden, and drawing logs to the place of destination. Washington's tent was pitched on the brow of a hill overlooking this strange spectacle. One after

another the rude structures went up, till a log city, containing between one and two thousand dwellings, stood in the clearings that had been made. Over the ground floor straw was scattered, and into these the 'Sons of Liberty,' as Colonel Barre had christened them, in the English Parliament, crept to starve and die. The officers' huts were ranged in lines in the rear of those of the soldiers, one being allowed to each of all of those who bore commissions, the whole being surrounded with intrenchments. But scarcely had the troops got into these comfortless houses, when there began to be a want of food in the camp. Congress, with that infallible certainty of doing the wrong thing, had recently, against Washington's advice, made a change in the quartermaster's and commissary's department, by which in this critical juncture, the army was left without provisions. In the meantime, news came that a large party of the enemy was advancing in the country to forage. Washington immediately ordered the troops to be in readiness to march, when, to his surprise, he found that they were wholly unable to stir, for want of food, and that a dangerous mutiny had broken out. The soldiers were willing to suffer or die,

### **Army Without Food.**

if necessary, but they would not submit to the neglect and indifference of Congress, which they knew could easily relieve their wants. The statements made by the different officers were of the most alarming kind. General Huntingdon wrote a note to Washington saying that his brigade was out of provisions, but he held it in readiness to march, as 'fighting was far preferable to starving.' General Varnum wrote, also, saying that his division had been two days without meat, and three days without bread, and that the men must be supplied, or they could not be commanded; still they were ready to march, as any change was better than slow starvation. On inquiry there was found only one purchasing commissary in camp, and he made the frightful report of not a 'single hoof of any kind to slaughter, and not more than twenty-five barrels of flour' to the whole army. Only small detachments, therefore, could be sent out. These hovered about the enemy, now bursting on a small party from some forest, and again surrounding the dwelling where they were reposing. The weather came on intensely cold, and the soldiers could hardly handle their muskets with their stiffened fingers. They rarely entered a house, and dared not kindle a fire at night, lest it should reveal their position to the enemy.

### **Great Suffering in the Camp.**

"Thus for a week, they kept marching and skirmishing, till the enemy withdrew to Philadelphia, when they returned to camp, having collected but little forage. Here suffering and want were

fast bringing things to a crisis. The soldiers were at first satisfied with the excuse given for the delay of provisions, viz: that the rains had made the roads almost impassable. But day after day passing without relief, they began to complain, and soon their murmurs swelled to loud clamors and threats. First the different regiments began to assemble, and the excitement increasing, whole brigades and divisions gathered together without order, and against the commands of their officers. The latter did not attempt to enforce obedience, but spoke kindly to them, saying that Wash-



MONUMENT TO ELIAS HOWE JR. AND GROUNDS IN PUBLIC PARK AT  
BRIDGEPORT, CONN.

ington was aware of their suffering condition, that it grieved him to the heart, and he was straining every nerve to obtain relief. Washington himself exhorted them to be obedient, saying that provisions would soon be in camp, and insubordination could result only in evil. The soldiers, in return, were calm and respectful. They told him they knew that their conduct was mutinous, but their condition justified it. They were actually starving, and relief must be had. They then respectfully communicated to him their fixed determination, which was to march in an orderly manner into the country, seize provisions wherever they could lay hands on them, giving in return certificates as to the amount and

value of the articles taken, and then return to camp, and to their duty. Never before was there a mutiny so devoid of crime, and which, in fact, partook of the moral sublime. Their language was: 'We are starving here, and shall soon be of no service to you or our country. We love you and the cause in which we are embarked. We will stand by you at all hazards, and defend with our last drop of blood our common country, but food we must and

### **Washington Overcome by the Suffering of the Soldiers.**

will have.' Washington was overcome by the condition and conduct of these men. So self-sustained in their sufferings—so constant to him in their destitution—so firm for their country, though abandoned by Congress, their language and attitude moved him deeply. There was something inexpressibly touching in the noble regret they manifested for appearing to be disobedient, and the high, manly grounds on which they defended their conduct. Washington, in reply, told them that he was well aware of the sufferings of his faithful soldiers. He had long admired their patience and resignation, and devotion to their country, under the most trying circumstances, and if the provisions did not arrive by a specified hour, he would place himself at their head, and march into the country till they were found. To this they consented, but the promised supplies arriving before the time fixed had expired, quietness and subordination were restored, and a movement, the results of which could not be foreseen, prevented.

'This supply, however, was soon exhausted, and then the same scenes of suffering were repeated. Nearly all the inhabitants in the vicinity of Valley Forge were Tories, and hence withheld the food they could have furnished. Finding that neither offers of pay nor threats could wring it from them, Washington, acting under a resolution of Congress, issued a proclamation in which he ordered all the farmers within seventy miles of Valley Forge, to thresh out half their grain by the first of February, and the other half by the first of March, under penalty of having the whole seized as straw. The Tories refused to comply, and many of them defended their barns and stacks with firearms. Some, unable to do this, set fire to their grain, to prevent its falling into the hands of the Americans. The soldiers turned themselves into

### **Soldiers Make Pack-horses of Themselves.**

pack-horses, yoked themselves to wagons and shrunk from no labor required to bring in provisions. But all the efforts and ingenuity of Washington could not prevent the gaunt figure of famine from stalking through his camp. Horses died for want of forage,

and the men became so reduced that scarcely enough could be found fit 'to discharge the military camp duties from day to day;' and even these few were compelled to borrow clothes to cover their nakedness while performing them.

"A week passed without a pound of flesh being brought into camp, and at last the bread gave out, and for several days the



ALPHONZO HOWE.

Son of Elijah Howe, Jr., uncle of Elias Howe Jr., and great grandson of Samuel Bemis Sr., born in Spencer July 3, 1805. Died at Brookfield. Father of John M. Howe and Mrs. Frank A. Smith.

starving soldiers had not a morsel to eat. Heavy snowstorms, followed by excessive frosts, swelled the sufferings that before had seemed unbearable. So few blankets had been supplied that

the benumbed soldiers were compelled to sleep sitting around their fires, to prevent freezing. Many were so naked that they could not show themselves outside of their huts, but hid shivering away in the scanty straw. Others would flit from hut to hut, with only a blanket to cover their otherwise naked forms. These huts, half closed up with snow, and the men wading around in their rags to beat paths, presented a singular spectacle of a bright wintry morning. In the midst of this accumulation of woes, the small-

### **Small Pox Breaks Out.**

pox broke out, and Washington was compelled to resort to inoculation to prevent the severe ravages of the disease. The sick, in consequence, were everywhere, and without blankets or provisions and hospital stores, and stretched on the earth wet and frosty, by turns, presented a scene of woe and wretchedness that beggars description. Starvation and despair will in the end demoralize the noblest army that ever defended a holy cause, and they at length began to tell on this band of patriots. A foreign officer, in walking through the encampment one day with Washington, heard through the crevices of the huts as he passed, men half naked muttering, "No pay, no clothes, no rum." Then he said he despaired of American liberty. Had Howe been made aware of this deplorable state of the army, he could have with a single blow crushed it to atoms. Amid this woe and suffering, Washington moved with a calm mien but a breaking heart. The piteous looks and haggard appearance of his poor soldiers—the consciousness that his army was powerless to resent any attack of the enemy, nay, on the point of dissolution, never probably to be reunited, all combined to press him so heavily with care, that even he must have sunk under it had he not put his trust in a higher power than man. One day a Quaker, by the name of Potts, was strolling up a creek, when he heard, in a secluded spot, the voice

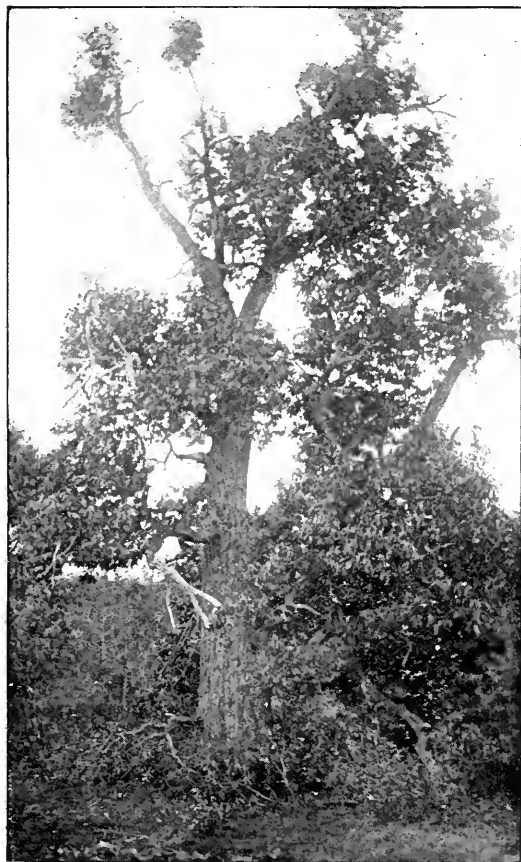
### **Washington Offers Prayer.**

of some one apparently engaged in prayer. Stealing quietly forward, he saw Washington's horse tied to a sapling, and a little further on, in a thicket, the chief himself, on his knees, and with tears streaming down his cheeks, beseeching Heaven for his country and his army. Before God alone, that strong heart gave way, and poured forth the full tide of its griefs and anxieties. Though the heavens grew dark around him, and disaster after disaster wrecked his brightest hopes, and despair settled down on officers and men, he showed the same unalterable presence—moved, the same tower of strength. But to his God he could safely go with his troubles, and on that arm securely lean. How sublime does



he appear, and how good and holy the cause he was engaged in seems, as he thus carries it to the throne of a just God, feeling that it has His sanction and can claim His protection.

"The poor man who had witnessed this spectacle hurried home, and on opening the door of his house burst into tears. His



ANCIENT CHESTNUT TREE.

This cut illustrates an ancient Chestnut tree, about seven feet in diameter, now standing on the farm of John M. Newton.

wife, amazed, inquired what was the matter with him. He told her what he had seen, and added, "If there is any one on this earth whom the Lord will listen to, it is George Washington, and

I feel a presentiment that under such a commander, there can be no doubt of our eventually establishing our independence, and that God in His providence has willed it so.'

"No wonder peace sat enthroned on that brow when despair clouded all others.

"In February his wife joined him, and as the two walked through the wretched camp, even the half-starved and mutinous soldier raised his head to bless them, and from many a pallid lip fell the 'Long live Washington,' as his tall form darkened the door of the hovel.

### **Washington Asserted That History Furnished no Parallel.**

"Washington boldly asserted that history could not furnish another instance of any army 'suffering such uncommon hardships, and bearing them with the same patience and fortitude.

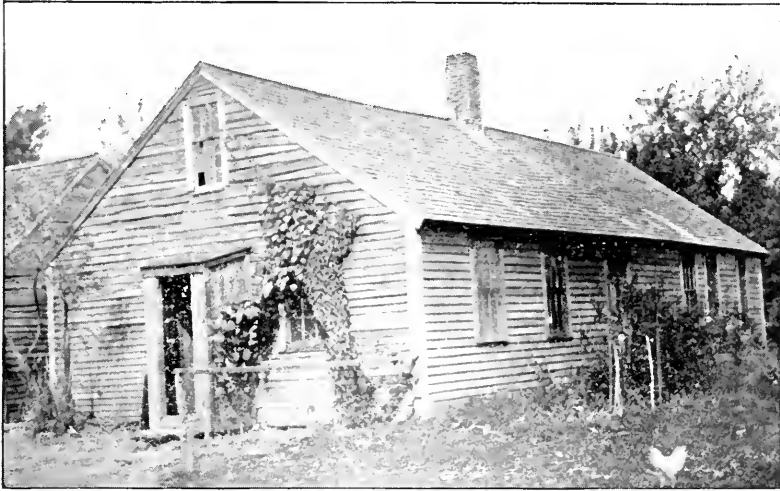
To see men,' said he, 'without clothes, to cover their nakedness, without blankets to lie on, without shoes, for the want of which their marches might be traced by the blood from their feet—and almost as often without provisions as with them, marching through frost and snow, and at Christmas taking up their winter-quarters within a day's march of the enemy, without a house or hut to cover them till they could be built, and submitting without a murmur, is a proof of patience and obedience which, in my opinion, can scarcely be paralleled.' "

### **The Patriotic Spencer Men Deserving of Honor.**

These men at Valley Forge, these men from Spencer, these men from the Bemis household, we honor today and they are as deserving of honor as they were the equals in valor of the immortal six hundred in the charge at Balaklava, or that heroic band of Grecians who so valiantly contested the pass at Thermopylae, and it is surely not too much to hope, that ere long a monument to their memory shall be erected at Bemis Memorial Park, by their descendants in appreciation of their patriotism.

The record says of these three soldiers of the Bemis name, that they enlisted "for the Town of Spencer" and "for the war." They went to fight until the end came, be the war a long or a short one. They went, not only for the town of Spencer but to maintain the honor of the Bemis name won by their fathers, Edmund and Jonas in the Colonial wars. They went in behalf of their homes and their kindred. They went in behalf of themselves, and to contend for principles as dear to them as life itself. And they were not dismayed by obstacles. They were there to overcome them. Their forefathers who had subdued the Indian, the wild beast and the wilderness, had gained by practice the habit of overcoming, and these qualities had been transmitted to

their children, and had become so firmly established in their natures that to have acted contrary to them, would have been to have denied action to their strongest traits of character. And these qualities prevailed not with them alone, but throughout the native husbandry of New England. And so they, with others, contended daily, monthly, yearly, with obstacles and adverse circumstances until the Continental Army was victorious. They



ORIGINAL HOUSE BUILT BY CAPT. EDMUND BEMIS.

When he settled on Lot 80, and where he lived and died. This house which is now standing, was known for a long time as the Austin Lamb place.

honored themselves and their ancestry by their devotion to the cause of Liberty, and you, descendants of these men, will honor yourselves in proportion as you honor them for their acts of love and self-sacrifice.

### The Bemis Family as Town Officers.

It should be a cause for just pride to the Bemis family to know that they have averaged to furnish for some important town office, more than one representative per year since 1753. The following is a complete list of those who have held such town offices from the time of the incorporation of the town of Spencer in 1753 to 1901, 148 years.

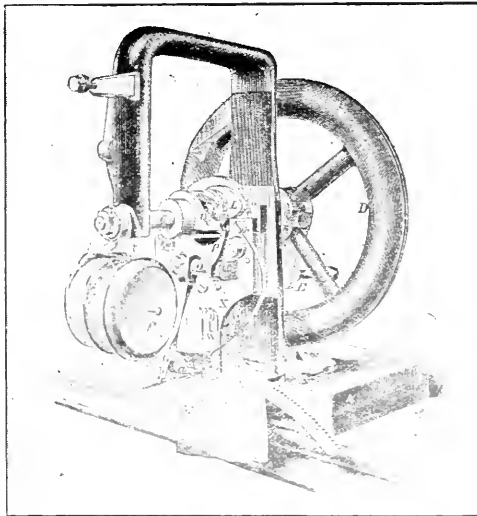
Selectmen.		Total years of service.
Bemis, Samuel Jr.,	1756-7-8-60.	4
Bemis, Edmund,	1759.	1

Selectmen.	Total years of services.
Bemis, William Sr., 1754-5-6-7-8-9, 1772-3-4-7-8	11
Bemis, Benjamin, 1784-5-6	3
Bemis, Jonas, 1798-9, 1800-1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8	11
Bemis, David Sr., 1801-2-3	3
Bemis, Joshua Sr., 1809-14-16-17	4
Bemis, William Jr., 1814-20-1-3-3-4-5-30-1	9
Bemis, Joshua Jr., 1860-1-2-70	4
Bemis Henry, 1870-1-2-3	4
Bemis, David Jr., 1865-6	2
Committee of Correspondence:	
Bemis, Benjamin, 1780	1
Representatives:	
Bemis, William, 1820	1
Bemis, Lewis, 1834-5	2
Treasurer:	
Bemis, Lewis, 1826-7-8-9	4
Town Clerks:	
Bemis, Samuel Jr., 1757-8-9-60	4
Bemis, Benjamin, 1781-2-6	3
Bemis, Lewis, 1831-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-40-1	11
Assessors:	
Bemis, Edmund, 1758-9-60-1	4
Bemis, William, 1763-4	2
Bemis, Benjamin, 1785	1
Bemis, Jonas, 1793, 1815	2
Bemis, William Jr., 1801-3-4-5-6-13-21-27-31-2	10
Bemis, Silas, 1809-13-14	3
Bemis, David, 1841-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-50-1-2-5-6-7-8 9-60-1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-70-1-2-3-4-5 6-7-8-9	36
Bemis Cheney, 1890	1
Bemis, Henry W., 1892-4-5-6-7	5
Bemis, William M., 1882	1
Overseer of Poor:	
Bemis, Henry W., 1870-1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9	10
Road Commissioner:	
Bemis, Lewis D., 1894-5-6, 1901	4
Total years, . . . . .	162

### The Bemis Religious Sentiment.

It is not clear how the earlier generations of the Bemis family regarded the question of religion, but it is certain they were not to any great degree church members. With the single statement by Draper that Jonas Bemis Sr. was a Baptist, no record has been

found indicating that any male descendant of Samuel Bemis was a member of a church prior to 1800. At the same time they appear to have been a church-going people. It is remembered by some of our oldest citizens that Rev. Levi Packard, pastor of the Congregational church, one Sabbath, about the year 1845, from the pulpit called attention to the fact that there were a large number of citizens in the town bearing the Bemis name, "not a single one of whom," said he, "is or ever has been a communicant of our



HOWE'S FIRST SEWING MACHINE.

This is a picture of the first sewing machine made by Elias Howe Jr., with a capacity of about 300 stitches per minute or eight times faster than the most skilful sewers by hand.

church." Before this time, however, some had joined the Baptist and Methodist churches as communicants and quite a number different parishes and societies, the names of which are herewith presented.

Prior to 1800 the Bemis family were represented in the Congregational church by four women only :

Name.	Date of Joining.	Name.	Date of Joining.
Bemis, Dinah,	Aug. 23, 1752	Bemis, Rebekah,	July 5, 1755
Bemis, Mary,	May —, 1759	Bemis, Sibbilah,	Apr. 17, 1785

Members from 1800 to date:

Name.	Date of Joining.	Name.	Date of Joining.
Bemis, Mary	1800	Bemis, Wm. M.	1867
Bemis, Polly	1813	Bemis, Phoebe Anna	"

Name.	Date of Joining.	Name.	Date of Joining.
Bemis, Mary	1827	Bemis, Dolly Ann	1867
Bemis, Catherine	"	Bemis, Emily P.	"
Bemis, Maria	1834	Bemis, Caroline A.	1884
Bemis, Lydia	1836	Bemis, Hattie W.	1885
Bemis, Abigail	1838	Bemis, Alonzo A.	1889
Bemis, Mary L.	1839	Bemis, Nellie T.	"
Bemis, Eunice	1843	Bemis, Anna Julia	1894
Bemis, Nancy	1846	Bemis, Bertha E.	1896
Bemis, Mary L.	1846	Bemis, Clifton A.	1898
Bemis, Janette	1858	Bemis, Eva M.	"
Bemis, Chas. W.	1866	Bemis, Edson C.	"

Members of the First Baptist Church having a place of worship at North Spencer:

Name.	Date of Joining.	Name.	Date of Joining.
Bemis, Polly.	1819	Bemis, Catherine,	1819
Bemis, Abigail,	1820	Bemis, Amos,	1820
Bemis, Lucretia,	1820	Bemis, Huldah,	1822
Bemis, Mary,	1830	Bemis, Sarah,	1836
Bemis, Ruth,	1841	Bemis, Selah,	1844
Bemis, Hiram P.,	1859	Bemis, Mrs. Hiram P.,	1861
		Bemis, Edson,	1861.

Members of Baptist church in Spencer village :

Name.	Name.
Bemis, George H.,	Bemis, Hattie Rowena,
Bemis, Pamela W.,	Bemis, Waldo L.,
	Bemis, Mabel.

Members of the Methodist Episcopal church :

Name.	Name.
Bemis, Amos,	Bemis, Huldah,
Bemis, Charles E.,	Bemis, Julia A.,
Bemis, Effie L.,	Bemis, Mary A.,
Bemis, Elbridge S.,	Bemis, Nellie F.,
Bemis, Emily W.,	Bemis, Tennyson O.

Many of the Bemis family besides the above attended this church but were not members. Foster Bemis came here with his family, before his removal West in 1855, and when the church was built in 1847 contributed the chestnut sills and joists which were cut on Bemis Hill, which he then owned, and were

sawed at the Sumner saw-mill where Theodore J. Bemis now has a grist-mill.

Members of Spencer Universalist church :

Name.	Name.
Bemis, Clara,	Bemis, Elizabeth,
Bemis, Edna,	Bemis, Emeline,
	Bemis, Fannie,

In 1798 a Baptist church was built on the hill in Brookfield, west of the Lewis D. Howland place and east of where Henry A.



ELBRIDGE HOWE.

Son of Elijah Howe Jr., uncle of Elias Howe Jr., and great grand-son of Samuel Bemis Sr. Born in Spencer March 6, 1810. Removed to Chester, Mass.

Woodis now lives. This was quite largely attended by the Bemis families of Spencer, and Nathaniel Bemis Jr. occupied the highest priced pew in the church.

In addition to the above it has been ascertained that William Bemis joined the First Baptist society of Spencer, April 28, 1825; David Bemis 2d joined the same society April 18, 1829. Franklin and Sylvanus Bemis joined the Universalist society of Charlton March, 1827. Joshua Bemis Jr. joined the Second Universalist society of Brookfield and Charlton February 17, 1820; and Alpha Bemis joined the First Universalist society of Sturbridge and Spencer in 1820.

### **The Bemis Family as Advocates of Temperance.**

At the time of the Washingtonian temperance movement in Spencer, from 1841 to 1852, there were over five hundred persons who became members of that society, of which number the Bemis family furnished nearly ten per cent., as follows :

Name.	Name.
Bemis, Alpha,	Bemis, Harriet E.,
Bemis, Amos,	Bemis, John Emmons,
Bemis, Arsenath,	Bemis, Laura,
Bemis, Caroline,	Bemis, Lewis,
Bemis, Caroline M.,	Bemis, Lewis W.,
Bemis, Chandler,	Bemis, Lorenzo,
Bemis, Clarissa L.,	Bemis, Louisa,
Bemis, Cynthia,	Bemis, Lucinda,
Bemis, Cynthia A.,	Bemis, Lucy,
Bemis, Danforth,	Bemis, Mary.
Bemis, Dexter,	Bemis, Mary L.,
Bemis, Dolly Ann,	Bemis, Nancy,
Bemis, Edwin,	Bemis, Rebekah,
Bemis, Edwin A.,	Bemis, Ruth B.,
Bemis, Edwin P.,	Bemis, Selah,
Bemis, Eliza,	Bemis, Susan,
Bemis, Ellen,	Bemis, Thomas R.,
Bemis, Emeline,	Bemis, William,
Bemis, Eunice W.,	Bemis, William 2d,
Bemis, George A.,	Bemis, William Jr.,
Bemis, Hulda,	Bemis, William O.,

### **The Distinguished Howe Family.**

Time will not permit rehearsing today all the worthy deeds that might be mentioned which have been performed by those of the Bemis name nor all the historical items of interest concerning this family, could they be collated, but this paper would be incomplete if time was not taken to mention the achievements of one family who were lineal descendants of Samuel Bemis



Sr., and who by their inventions have made themselves, as well as Spencer famous, and this is the Howe family. What the Bemis family have been able to do in the way of gaining a good reputation for themselves in a country town, the Howe family have accomplished on a scale that embraces the

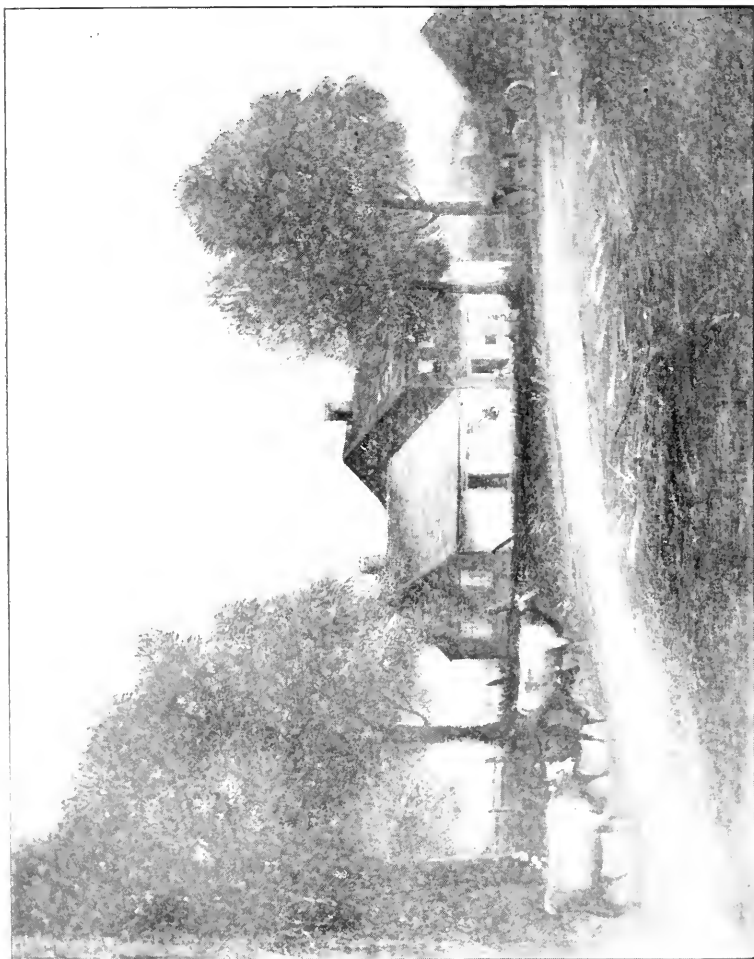


TYLER HOWE.

Inventor of the spring bed and great grandson of Samuel Bemis Sr., born in Spencer Aug. 11, 1800; died in Cambridge, June 9, 1880.

world; and wherever civilization has gone, there the Howe name is known and honored. It is therefore peculiarly appropriate that we ascertain what they did of so great value to the world as to receive its homage. The names of these men, a trio of inventors, are Tyler and William Howe, sons of Elijah Howe Jr., and their

nephew, Elias Howe Jr., son of their brother Elias, all born at the old homestead now standing opposite Howe's mills in the south part of Spencer. So far as the ties of blood are concerned,



THE OLD HOWE HOMESTEAD.

*(See opposite page.)*

Tyler and William Howe were half Howe and half Bemis, while Elias Howe Jr. was three-fourths Bemis and one-fourth Howe, according to the laws of consanguinity. This is not said with a view of trying to pluck any laurels from the Howe name, but only to show that whatever honors the Howe family are justly entitled

to, the Bemis family, on the ground of relationship, can, if they will, appropriate their full share. Tyler Howe was the inventor of the spring bed. He went to California in search of gold in 1849 and returned the year following. The hardness of his bunk on board the vessel in which he sailed was daily a source of annoyance, for which, in the realms unseen, he sought a remedy. At last a picture of what he desired presented itself to his mind and the difficulty was solved. He patented his invention in 1855 and commenced the manufacture of the patented articles, which, finding a ready sale, enabled him to amass a comfortable fortune. While today the varieties of spring beds are legion, he was the man who conceived the initial idea and carried it forward to demonstration.

William Howe was the inventor of the truss bridge. When the New York Central R. R., now passing through Spencer, was

### The Old Howe Homestead,

At Howe's Mills, Spencer, Mass., cut of which is shown on opposite page, is where were born William, Tyler, Elias, Elbridge, Alphonzo and Hiram, sons of Elijah Howe, Sr., and Elias Howe, Jr., inventor of the sewing machine. This engraving is from an oil painting in the Spencer Museum, made by W. O. Bemis of the Paxton branch of the Bemis family. In 1871, the author, being at that time a trustee of the museum and active in soliciting articles for the same, saw the late W. O. Bemis and secured his kindly interest in painting and donating the picture reproduced above. This is the best illustration of the Howe homestead extant, and is a remarkably faithful painting of the old historic house and surroundings as they were twenty-seven years ago. This picture is one of the most valuable, as well as valued, keepsakes in the museum.

built under the name of the Western R. R., it was at first only projected from Worcester to Springfield, with Albany as the final termination, but no engineer of that time knew how the Connecticut river at Springfield was to be bridged. This problem Wm. Howe undertook to solve, and succeeded in solving it to the appreciation of all the noted engineers of that date. It is said by some that he borrowed the idea from a truss supporting a roof in an old church at Brookfield. Whether this be true or not cannot now be determined, but it is certain that his bridge was a new and novel way to span rivers and marked a new era in bridge construction.

Improvements have been made in bridge building since his time and iron has largely superseded wood, but the principle of trussed work, discovered by William Howe, bids fair never to be superseded. To illustrate the market value of his invention, it is recorded that a few years after the Connecticut river bridge had been built, he sold the right to build such bridges in several of the Western states for sixty thousand dollars. The original drawings for his truss work were all made in Spencer, on the plaster walls

of the hallways in the old Tavern, which stood on the present site of the Baptist church and Denny Hall school building, and there they remained until the building was torn down some thirty years ago.

Elias Howe Jr. was the inventor of the sewing machine. This is so familiar a sentence that time need not be taken to describe his invention in detail. The machine he devised was a success from the beginning. He was the man who discovered that the needle must have an eye near its point in order to make a stitch that would not rip, and all makers of machines since his day



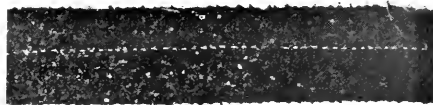
ELIAS HOWE JR.

Inventor of the sewing machine; born in Spencer, July 9, 1819; great grandson of Samuel Bemis Sr.

have been obliged to adopt his method simply because there was no other way to do. James Parton, the distinguished writer, said: "Elias Howe can justly claim that it was his invention which enabled the United States to put and keep a million men in the field during the War of the Rebellion. Those countless garments, tents, haversacks, cartridge boxes, shoes, blankets, sails; how could they have been produced without the sewing machine? One day during the war at three o'clock in the afternoon an order from the War Department reached New York by telegraph for fifty thousand sand bags such as are used in field works. By two o'clock the next afternoon the bags had been made, packed, shipped and started southward." In 1860, a statistician of repute made a care-

ful computation, and his figures showed an annual saving to the United States alone of nineteen million dollars by the use of the sewing machine. It is also estimated that on an average every adult in the country fifty years of age is indebted at least two hundred dollars to Elias Howe's invention. If, then, there is reason to think well of a man who contributes two hundred dollars towards his neighbor's expenses, a man certainly should be well thought of and respected who devises means whereby his neighbor, if he will, may yearly add to his bank account sums of money he could not otherwise have done.

Col. Draper in his book "The Bemis Family in America" tells an interesting story how Elias Howe Jr. discovered where to place the needle's eye. He says: "He almost beggared himself before he discovered where the eye of the needle should be located.



PICTURE OF CLOTH SEWED ON FIRST SEWING MACHINE.

One of the first articles sewed together on the Elias Howe, Jr., sewing machine by the inventor were two strips of broadcloth. This was cut into pieces and distributed among his uncles. Alphonzo Howe had the piece from which the above cut was taken and it is now in possession of his daughter, Mrs. Frank A. Smith of Worcester.

It is probable there are but a very few persons who know how it came about. His original idea was to follow the model of the ordinary needle and have the eye at the heel. It never occurred to him that it should be placed near the point and he might have failed altogether if he had not dreamed he was building a sewing machine for a savage king in a strange country. Just as in his actual waking experience he was perplexed about the needle's eye. He thought the King gave him twenty-four hours in which to complete the machine and make it sew. If not finished in that time, death was to be the punishment. Howe worked and worked and puzzled; finally gave it up. Then he thought he was taken out to be executed. He noticed that the warriors carried spears that were pierced near the head. Instantly came the solution of the difficulty, and while the inventor was begging for time he awoke. It was four o'clock in the morning. He jumped out of bed, ran to his workshop and by nine a needle with an eye at the point had been rudely modeled. After that it was easy. That is

the true story of an important incident in the invention of the sewing machine."

Last year in the city of New York, on the beautiful University Heights overlooking the Harlem and Hudson rivers, and in full view of the famous Palisades, was dedicated the "Hall of Fame for great Americans," an elegant fireproof structure designed to last for ages. In this building one hundred and fifty places had been provided as a national abiding place for memorials commemorating the deeds and virtues of citizens of the United States who had

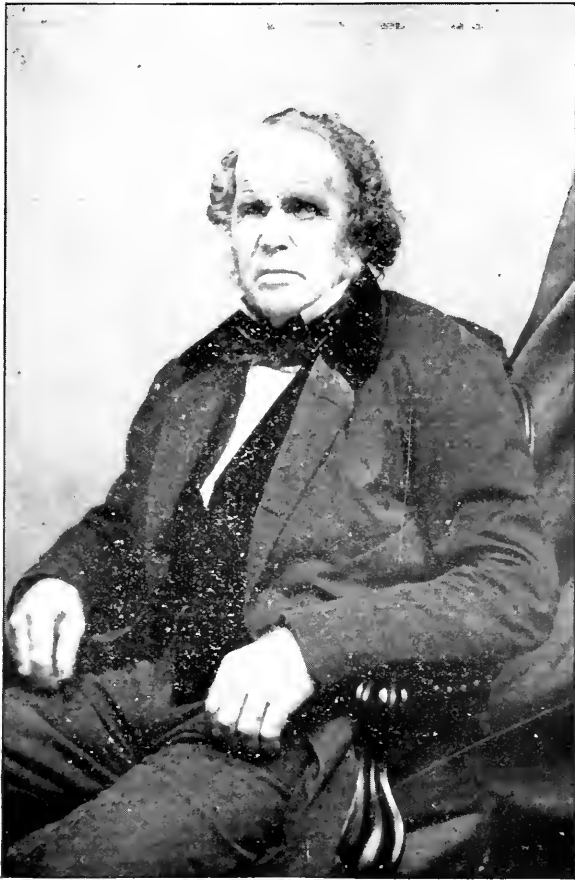


MRS. LYDIA HOWE LUKE.

Daughter of Tyler Howe, a resident of West Newton and a generous contributor to the Samuel Bemis monument fund.

rendered their country, or the world, distinguished service. By agreement those places could not all be filled before the year 2000. Before the dedication, a committee of one hundred able men of independent judgment, including such men as Pres. Eliot of Harvard College, Pres. White of Cornell University, the Judges of the U. S. Supreme Court, eminent historians, Chief Justices of the Supreme Courts in every state, and others equally distinguished for judicial qualities of mind—voted singly in their own respective places of abode on a list of names thought worthy of admittance

to this Hall, and which had been placed in nomination by the American public. It had been agreed that fifty names might be selected in the year 1900 and from thence on five names at the



ELIAS HOWE SR.,

Son of Elijah Howe, Jr., and great grandson of Samuel Bemis Sr.,  
Born in Spencer, Dec. 27, 1792. Married Polly Bemis of Chester.  
They were published Sept. 29, 1816, and married  
Oct. 22, 1816; he died Dec. 28, 1867.

end of every five years, until the year 2000 when all the panels would be filled. A majority vote only could elect, and it was found after the votes had all been sent to the University of New York and counted, that only 29 persons had been chosen. Under

the rules a revote could not be taken, and so the election of further candidates was deferred until the year 1905, when it will be in order to choose twenty-six additional names. The names of those



ALPHA BEMIS.

Son of Jonas Jr. and great grandson of Samuel Sr. Born in Spencer, March, 1790. Died January 4, 1860.

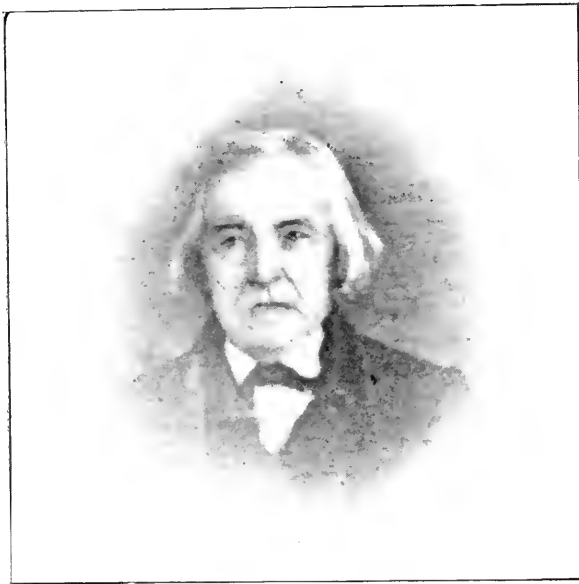
who failed of an election last year by ten votes or less are herewith annexed.

James B. Eads	received 41 votes.
John Lothrop Motley	" 41 "
Benjamin Rush	" 42 "
Joseph Henry	" 44 "
Horace Greely	" 45 "
Rufus Choate	" 47 "
Elias Howe Jr.	" 47 "
Mark Hopkins	" 48 "
John Quincy Adams	" 48 "
Andrew Jackson	" 48 "
James Madison	" 49 "
John C. Calhoun	" 49 "
Wm. Cullen Bryant	" 49 "

a total of thirteen and in view of all the facts it appears probable that at the next election these names will be chosen as members



of what will become in time the immortal band of one hundred and fifty, whose fame is to be perpetuated in bronze and marble in the Queen City of America. What a just tribute of honor to the life work of Elias Howe Jr. would his election be, and how highly prized by the Howe and Bemis families! What an honor conferred on the town of Spencer! When we analyze and compare the real value to the world of some of the so-called great men, men who have made history, like Napoleon the Great, men who like him have expended their strength to gratify an unworthy



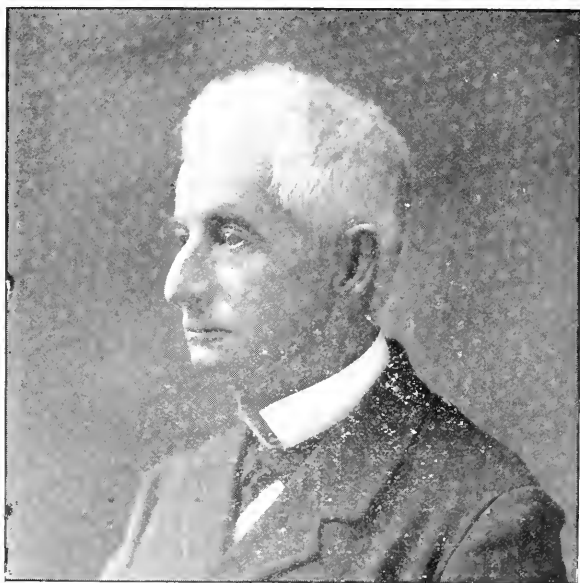
ELIAS BEMIS.

Son of Joshua Sr. and grandson of Samuel Sr. Born in Spencer, Dec. 23, 1773; removed to Lyndon, Vt., where he died Jan'y 24, 1849. He was a farmer and a good business man and accumulated a handsome estate.

ambition, sowing seeds of discord and misery and scattering destruction broadcast wherever they went; how striking in contrast, appears to the world the beneficent results flowing from the efforts of intelligent New England citizens like Tyler, William and Elias Howe Jr. The value of a peaceful and honorable avocation compared with the fame won by the warlike Napoleon was never more fully illustrated than in the following extract from a speech by Col. R. J. Ingersoll. He said:

"A little while ago I stood by the grave of the old Napoleon—a magnificent tomb of gilt and gold, fit almost for a dead deity

—and gazed upon the sarcophagus of black Egyptian marble where rest at last the ashes of that restless man. I leaned over the balustrade and thought about the career of the greatest soldier of the modern world. I saw him walking upon the banks of the Seine, contemplating suicide—I saw him at Toulon—I saw him putting down the mob in the streets of Paris—I saw him at the head of the army of Italy—I saw him crossing the bridge of Lodi with the tricolor in his hand—I saw him at Egypt in the shadows of the pyramids—I saw him conquer the Alps and mingle



THOMAS A. PROUTY.

Donor of land for the site first selected for the Bemis Monument. Born in Spencer, Aug. 11, 1822. Has been a school teacher, farmer and merchant, and served the town as assessor, overseer of the poor and member of the school committee, and the state twenty-eight years as justice of the peace, and three years as trial justice. (Photographed by Edward L. Jaynes. 1901.)

the eagles of France with the eagles of the crags—I saw him at Marengo—at Ulm and Austerlitz—I saw him in Russia where the infantry of the snow and the cavalry of the wild blast scattered his legions like Winter's withered leaves—I saw him at Leipzig in defeat and disaster, driven by a million bayonets back upon Paris, clutched like a wild beast—banished to Elba, I saw him escape and retake an empire by the force of his genius—I saw him upon the frightful field of Waterloo, where chance and fate com-

bined to wreck the fortunes of their former king. And I saw him at St. Helena with his hands crossed behind him, gazing out upon the sad and solemn sea. I thought of the orphans and widows he had made—of the tears that had been shed for his glory, and of the only woman who ever loved him, pushed from his heart by the cold hand of ambition. And I said, I would rather have been a French peasant and worn wooden shoes—I would rather have lived in a hut with a vine growing over the door, and the grapes growing purple in the kisses of the Autumn sun—



POLLY BEMIS,

Daughter of Sylvester Bemis and great granddaughter of Samuel Bemis Sr. Born in Chester, Mass., Aug. 9, 1791. Married Elias Howe Sr., mother of Elias Howe Jr., inventor of the sewing machine. Died at Cambridgeport, Sept. 12, 1871.

I would rather have been that poor peasant with my loving wife by my side knitting as the day died out of the sky, with my children upon my knees and their arms about me—I would rather have been that man, and gone down to the tongueless silence of the dreamless dust, than to have been that imperial impersonation of force and murder known as Napoleon the Great.”

To have provided the world, both sick and well with comfortable beds on which to sleep; to have provided means which makes

possible transit by rail rapid and continuous, crossing rivers and spanning chasms with safe bridges; to have furnished the means whereby every article of clothing mankind needs may be quickly, cheaply and durably made, are, anyone of them, more valuable achievements than all the victorious wars of Napoleon. It is true that by these wars the feudal system of the old world was destroyed and this undoubtedly was for the best interests of mankind. It is true that he planned and partially carried out internal improvements in France which were of very great value, but it is also quite likely as true, that all he did was done to gratify his own



SILHOUETTE OF ANNA BEMIS.

Daughter of Joshua Sr. and grand daughter of Samuel Sr. Born in Spencer, January 2, 1784. Married Abraham Capen Sr., May 25, 1817, and died May 21, 1824; grandmother of Herbert H. and Elida M. Capen.

with profit be taught in our public schools, and it is probable as the years come and go, and the centuries fade away, this story of Samuel Bemis will lose none of its interest to his descendants and to the citizens of the town of Spencer.

ambition for power, and hence his acts are robbed of every enobling virtue, even though good was the outcome. It appears probable that if the country he is said to have loved, his own France, had stood in the way of his ambition, he would have sacrificed her as readily as he did his own Josephine. Better, ten thousand times better, to have brought needed inventions into the world to lighten its labors and add to its comforts than to have won the most noted victories of warfare without some worthy motive.

And now we must close. We have learned much concerning the life and virtues of the founder of our town and of his descendants that is worthy of our highest esteem, and much that might

## BEMIS REVOLUTIONARY WAR RECORD.

---

The following is the Revolutionary War record of the grandsons of Samuel Bemis, taken from the State archives :

BENJAMIN BEMIS, Spencer, private, Captain John Wolcott's company of Rangers, which marched on the alarm of April 19, 1775 from Brookfield and Spencer, service twelve days ; also sergeant, Captain Joel Green's Company, Colonel Ebenezer Larnard's regiment. Muster-roll dated August 1, 1775 ; enlisted May 3, 1775, service three months, six days ; also company return probably October, 1775 ; also First-Lieutenant Captain David Proutie's Eighth, North Spencer company, Colonel Samuel Denny's First Worcester County regiment ; list of officers Massachusetts Militia, dated Leicester, March 28, 1776. Commissioned April 5, 1776 ; also Private Captain Ralph Earll's Company, Colonel Danforth Keyes' regiment, enlisted August 20, 1777, discharged January 3, 1778, service four months, nineteen days. Roll dated Providence.

SAMUEL BEMIS JR., Spencer, private, Captain Ebenezer Mason's company, Colonel Jonathan Warner's regiment which marched on the alarm of April 19, 1775 ; service thirty-seven days ; also corporal, Captain Joel Green's company, Colonel Ebenezer Larnard's regiment. Muster-roll dated August 1, 1775. Enlisted May 26, 1775, service two months, eleven days ; also served in Captain Jonathan Carriel's company, Colonel Josiah Whitney's regiment. Receipt for advance pay dated Point Shirley, June 13, 1776 ; also sergeant, pay-rolls for service from date of enlistment May 17, 1776, to November 1, 1776, five months fifteen days. Roll for August to October, 1776, dated at Hull ; also pay-roll for one month, four days' service in November and December, 1776 ; also served in Captain David Prouty's company, Colonel Job Cushing's Worcester County regiment. Enlisted July 27, 1777 ; discharged August 28, 1777, service one month eight days ; marched to reinforce northern army by order of General Warner.

REUBEN BEMIS, private, Captain John Wolcott's company of Rangers, which marched on the alarm of April 19, 1775 ; service twelve days.

JOHN BEMIS, Spencer, corporal, Captain Joel Green's company, Colonel Ebenezer Larnard's regiment. Muster roll

dated August 1, 1775; enlisted May 3, 1775; service three months, five days; also company returned probably October, 1775; also return of men enlisted into Continental Army dated January 1781, Colonel Shepard's fourth regiment. Enlisted March 4, 1777, private, Captain Ebenezer Mason's company, Colonel Thomas Marshall's regiment; enlisted August 16, 1777; discharged November 30, 1777. Service three months, twenty-three days, in northern department. Residence Spencer, enlisted during war.

JOSEPH BEMIS, Charlton, Captain Jonathan Carriel's company, Colonel Josiah Whitney's regiment; receipt for advance



CATHERINE BEMIS.

Daughter of Joshua Sr. and granddaughter of Samuel Sr., born in Spencer, June 24, 1778. Married James Howland January 24, 1779 and removed to Brookfield. To illustrate the vigor of the Bemis family, Pardon Howland, son of Catherine Bemis, told the author that he never knew what it was to feel tired until he was past fifty years of age. We are indebted to Pardon Howland for this excellent picture of his mother, and the best picture extant of a grandchild of Samuel Bemis Sr. Before his parents had become infirm, Mr. Howland had pictures of them taken and finished in the highest state of the art known at that time.

pay dated Point Shirley, June 13, 1776; pay-rolls for service from date of enlistment May 17, 1776, to November 1, 1776, five months, fifteen days. Muster-roll for August to October,

1776, dated Hull ; also pay-roll for one month, four days service in November and December, 1776.

PHINEAS BEMIS, private, Captain Abner Cranson's company, Colonel Asa Whitcomb's regiment ; receipt for wages for August, 1775, dated Prospect Hill ; also order for bounty-coat or its equivalent in money, dated Prospect Hill, November 13, 1775.

ELEAZER Bemis, Charlton, private, Captain Jacob Davis' company, Colonel Ebenezer Larnard's regiment which marched on the alarm of April 19, 1775, to Roxbury, service fifteen days ; reported enlisted into the army ; also Captain William Campbell's company, Colonel Larnard's regiment ; return dated Roxbury, October, 7, 1775 ; also order for bounty-coat or its equivalent in money dated Roxbury, December 21, 1775. Muster-roll dated August 1, 1775 ; enlisted April 26, 1775 ; service three months, one week, five days ; also ensign, Colonel William Shepard's regiment ; Continental Army pay accounts for service from January 1, 1777 to August 18, 1779 ; reported resigned ; also order for clothing dated Camp Valley Forge, May 1, 1778 ; also Captain Reuben Slayton's company, Colonel Shepard's third regiment. Muster rolls for July to November, 1778, dated Camp at Providence ; reported on furlough in October, 1778 ; also Colonel's company, Colonel Shepard's regiment. Muster-roll for March and April, 1779, dated Providence. Enlisted January 1, 1777, reported on command at the Western Shore ; also lieutenant in Colonel Shepard's regiment ; list of settlement of rank of Continental officers, dated West Point, November 9, 1779, made by a board held for that purpose and confirmed by Congress September 6, 1779. Reported resigned August 18, 1779.

JESSE BEMIS, son of William Bemis, private in Captain Ebenezer Mason's company, Colonel Jonathan Warner's regiment, which marched on the alarm of April 19, 1775, service fourteen days ; also sergeant, Captain Abel Holden's (third) company, Colonel Thomas Nixon's (fifth) regiment. Continental Army pay accounts for service from April 1, 1777, to December 31, 1779, credited to the town of Spencer ; reported as serving seven months, five days as corporal, twenty-five months, twenty-five days as sergeant, also muster-roll for May, 1779, dated Highlands, appointed November 12, 1777. Enlistment three years ; also private, Captain Joel Green's company, Colonel Ebenezer Larnard's regiment. Muster-roll dated August 1, 1775 ; enlisted May 8, 1775 ; service three months, one day ; also company return (probably October, 1775) ; also return of men enlisted into Continental Army from Captain David Prouty's company, Colonel Denny's regiment, dated February 13, 1778 ; residence Spencer, enlisted for town of Spencer. Joined Captain Holden's company, Colonel

Nixon's regiment. Enlistment three years. Reported mustered by Thomas Newhall. Muster May 6, 1777.



DENTER BEMIS.

Son of Amasa Bemis Sr., and great grandson of Samuel Bemis Sr. Born at the old homestead October 10, 1810. Kept for a time the old hotel which then stood opposite the Congregational church. After this he kept store in a building which stood on the site of the present Boston Branch grocery. In 1853 he emigrated to the State of Wisconsin.

BARNARD BEMIS, Spencer, private, Captain Ralph Earle's company, Colonel Danforth Keyes regiment; enlisted August 20, 1777; discharged January 3, 1778; service four months fifteen days. Roll dated at Providence.

DAVID BEMIS, private, Capt. Josiah White's company, Colonel Samuel Denny's Worcester County regiment. Enlisted August 21, 1777; discharged August 23, 1777, service five days; marched to Hadley in Lieut.-Colonel Benjamin Flagg's division on an alarm at the northward. Roll dated Spencer.

OBADIAH BEMIS, Spencer. Return of men enlisted into Continental Army from Captain Josiah White's company, Colonel Denny's regiment, dated Charlton, February 18, 1778; residence Spencer, enlisted for town of Spencer, joined Captain Slater's company, Colonel Shepard's regiment. Enlistment three years; also private 'Colonel's company, Colonel William Shepard's third (also given fourth regiment), Continental Army pay account for service from

January 1, 1780 to December 31, 1780; also return made



up to December 31, 1780 dated West Point; also private, Captain Field's company, Colonel William Shepard's third regiment. Continental pay account for service from March 4, 1777 to December 31, 1779; also Captain Reuben Slayton's company. Residence Spencer, enlisted for the town of Spencer; also muster rolls July to November, 1778, dated Camp at Providence; reported sick at Valley Forge in July and August, 1778; also Colonel's company, Colonel Shepard's regiment. Muster-roll for March and April, 1779, dated Providence; enlisted March 24, 1777. Enlistment during war; reported sick in hospital.

NATHANIEL BEMIS, sergeant, Captain John Weston's company, Colonel Eleazer Brooks' regiment of Guards; enlisted January 12, 1778; roll made up to February 3, 1778, service twenty-two days at Cambridge and Charlestown guarding troops of convention.

JONAS BEMIS JR., Spencer, private, Captain Field's company, Colonel William Shepard's third regiment. Enlisted for the town of Spencer—Valley Forge Continental Army pay accounts for service from March 4, 1777 to December 31, 1779; also Captain Reuben Slayton's company, Colonel Shepard's regiment. Muster return dated Valley Forge, January 30, 1778. Residence, Spencer; enlisted for the town of Spencer; also muster-rolls for July, August, October and November, 1778, dated at Camp Providence; reported under confinement in November, 1778; also Colonel's company, Colonel Shepard's regiment. Muster-roll for March and April, 1779, dated Providence, enlisted March 14, 1777, during war; also corporal Continental Army pay accounts for service from January 1, 1780 to December 31, 1780; also return taken to December 31, 1780, dated West Point; also Captain James Cooper's company, Colonel Shepard's regiment. His name is in the return of men enlisted into Continental Army from Captain Josiah White's company, Colonel Denny's regiment, dated Charlton, February 18, 1778. Residence, Spencer, enlisted for town of Spencer. Joined Captain Slayton's company, Colonel Shepard's regiment. Enlistment three years.

AMASA BEMIS, private, Captain John Wolcott's company of Rangers which marched on the alarm of April 19, 1775, from Brookfield and Spencer. Service twelve days; also probably a member of Captain John Cowle's company, Colonel Benjamin Ruggles Woodbridge's regiment; order for bounty-coat, or its equivalent in money, dated Cambridge, December 23, 1775.

This is a remarkable record, unexcelled in Spencer history, and it is thought rarely equalled in the history of New England.



BRONZE STATUE OF ELIAS HOWE JR.,  
At Sea Side Park, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

## BEMIS CIVIL WAR RECORD.

---

The data of the following soldiers of the Bemis name who went from Spencer, is taken from the roster of the Grand Army:

HENRY BEMIS, born in Spencer December 13, 1836. He entered the service July 19, 1862 at Worcester, Massachusetts, as a private in company E, thirty-fourth Massachusetts volunteers, and was discharged June 13, 1865 at Fortress Monroe, the war having closed. December 27, 1864, he was promoted to corporal, which rank he held when discharged. His first battle was at New Market, May 15, 1864. Subsequently he engaged in the battles at Berryville, September 3, 1864; Winchester, September 19, 1864; Fisher's Hill, September 22, 1864; Strasburg, October 13, 1864; Cedar Creek, October 19, 1864 and Fort Gregg, April 2, 1865. At New Market, May 15, 1864, he was wounded in the thigh and at Fort Gregg, April 2, 1865, he was wounded in the ankle. During his service he was confined in the hospitals at Frederick, Maryland, Baltimore and Fortress Monroe. His most intimate comrades in the service were Henry Sibley, George P. Clark, Henry and Dwight Chickering and Henry Converse.

CHARLES A. BEMIS, born at Paxton, December 12, 1838. Entered the service at Worcester, September 2, 1862, as a private in company A, fifty-first regiment Massachusetts volunteers, and was discharged at Boston, July 27, 1863, through the expiration of his term of enlistment. The first battle in which he engaged was the battle of Whitehall. Subsequently he participated in the battles of Kingston and Goldsboro.

CHARLES E. BEMIS, born August 5, 1839, at Spencer. Enlisted in the service at Spencer, August 20, 1862, as a private in company F, forty-second regiment Massachusetts volunteers, and was discharged at Readville, Massachusetts, August 20, 1863 by reason of expiration of his term of service. He was confined through illness for three weeks in the hospital while stationed at Lake Ponchartrain, Louisiana. His most intimate comrades in the service were Charles H. Allen, Henry A. Knowlton, Charles Sargeant, Charles Lyon, Henry Lyon and Sergeant Hiram Cowan.

FREDERICK AUGUSTUS BEMIS, was born in Spencer, December 20, 1834, and enlisted August 23, 1861 as first sergeant in company C, twenty-first regiment, Massachusetts volunteers. February 28, 1862, he was promoted to second-lieutenant, and July 28, 1862 to first-lieutenant. Four days later he was killed at

the battle of Chantilly, Virginia. His first fight was at Roanoke Island, North Carolina, February 8, 1862. Subsequently he took part in the battles of Newbern, March 14, 1862, Camden Court House, April 19, 1862, second Bull Run, August 28, 29, 30, 1862 and Chantilly, September 1, 1862. The body of Lieutenant Bemis lies in an unknown grave notwithstanding much fruitless search for it. His service covers a period of one year and eight days, every day of which he was on duty and did his full duty. At the time of his death he was expecting, and doubtless would have received it, if he had lived, a higher commission in one of the



LIEUT. FREDERICK A. BEMIS.

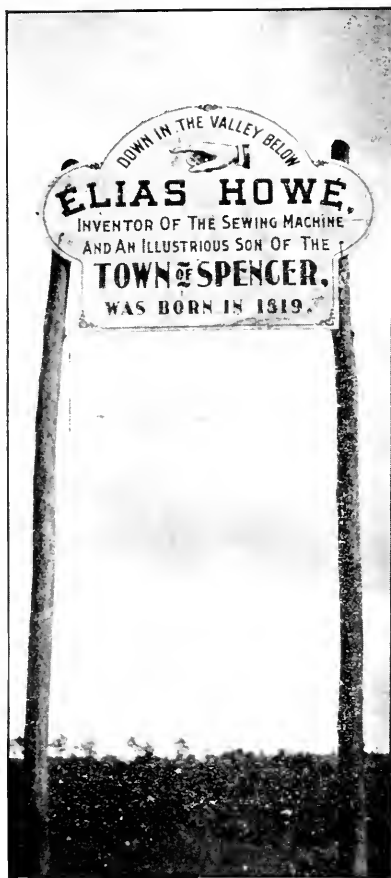
Of Spencer. Killed at the Battle of Chantilly, Va., August 1, 1862.

new companies then recruiting in his native State. He was brave, capable, patriotic and ambitious. No braver man ever carried a musket or wore a sword. This sketch has been outlined at the request of the compiler of these narratives, Erastus Jones, by the deceased friend and companion, Capt. William T. Harlow.

ALVIN BEMIS was born in Spencer, Massachusetts, October 16, 1839, and entered the service September 23, 1861, at Readville, Massachusetts, as a private in Company I, twenty-seventh regiment Massachusetts volunteers, and was discharged

at Newbern, North Carolina, April 23, 1863, for disability. His first battle was at Roanoke Island.

Subsequently he participated in the battles of Fort Mason and Newbern, after which battle he was put upon General Burnside's Dispatch and Headquarters boat and remained there until about the time Burnside went to the Army of the Potomac. For about a month he was confined in the hospital at Portsmouth, North Carolina. His intimate comrades in the service were John Marsh of Spencer, Horace Pike, Wm. Lamb, Frederick Young, and Wm. King of Charlton, A. S. Howe of Salem, and Slayton N. Dean of North Brookfield. The most important events in his service he considers were the capture of Newbern, North Carolina, and laying outside Hatteras Inlet three days and nights with signals of distress flying, before any help ventured near. He was on the Alice Price dispatch boat when it took the prisoners from Fort Mason who were paroled at their homes. He was at Elizabeth City when Commander Tatnel set fire to his fleet and swam ashore, and was constantly on the move about Pamlico and Albermarle Sounds and their inlets. After re-



TABLET

Erected in 1901 on the New York Central R. R. near Howe's Crossing, Spencer, by Chas. N. Prouty, Thomas H. Clark and other public-spirited citizens.

turning to his regiment he went to Swansboro and assisted in destroying the salt works there, and he was kept actively at work until he was sent, late in the fall, to the hospital.

ELIAS BEMIS, born in Spencer February 22, 1837. En-

listed July 20, 1864, as a private in company F, sixtieth Massachusetts volunteers. Discharged November 30, 1864.

OSCAR R. BEMIS, born in Spencer, January 23, 1834. Enlisted as a private June 14, 1861, in company K, tenth Massachusetts volunteers. Discharged, and reenlisted in company E,



FANNY BEMIS,

Daughter of Joshua Sr., and granddaughter of Samuel Sr. Married Elijah Howe Jr., March 18, 1799. Mother of Elias, Tyler, William, Alphonzo and Elbridge Howe and grandmother of Elias Howe, Jr. Born in Spencer July 24, 1771. Died November 25, 1852.

The following verse is on her headstone in the old cemetery :

"While o'er a dear and aged friend  
We drop the tear and heave the sigh,  
Faith whispers we shall yet ascend  
To meet where love shall never die."

thirty-fourth Massachusetts volunteers July 31, 1862. Died in hospital at Baltimore, August 26, 1862.

EDMOND J. BEMIS, born in Spencer August 19, 1842. Enlisted as a private August 20, 1863, in company F, forty-second regiment Massachusetts volunteers. Died of heart disease at Albany, New York, June 21, 1868.

The descendants of Samuel Bemis who participated in the War of the Rebellion from other places were numerous, but the author has made no attempt to trace their history.

## DETACHED FRAGMENTS OF BEMIS HISTORY.

---

Members of the Bemis family, who were in Capt. Ebenezer Mason's company and marched to Cambridge on the alarm of April 19, 1775:

Bemis, Jesse, son of William,  
Bemis, John, son of Edmund,  
Bemis, Samuel, son of Samuel Jr.

---

Members of the Bemis family who were in Capt. John Wolcott's company of Brookfield and Spencer rangers:

Bemis, Jonas Sr., Lieut.  
Bemis, Amasa, son of Joshua Sr.,  
Bemis, Reuben, } sons of Samuel Jr.  
Bemis, Benjamin, }

---

Revolutionary Pensioners in Spencer:

Bemis, Jesse,  
Bemis, Jonas,  
Bemis, Amasa.

---

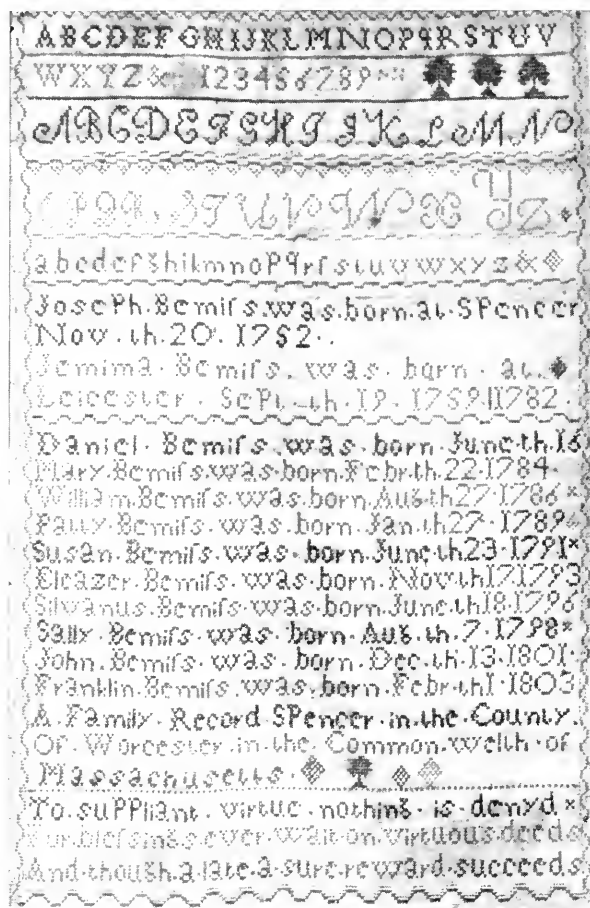
In 1854 there were thirty-four voters of the Bemis name in Spencer, thought to be the largest number recorded in any one year.

---

### **Samuel Bemis Jr. Settles On Tucker Hill.**

Samuel Bemis Jr. settled on the east end of lot 56, which he purchased of Benjamin Tucker's heirs. His house was on the southern slope of the hill about due north from the farm house owned for many years by Tucker & Woodbury. There used to be a road pass his house which commenced on the Charlton road about twenty-five rods south of the barn of Harvey Sibley and

ran westerly to the house recently known as the Bardwell place, now owned by Leonard W. Bisco. Some portions of this road, with the wall on both sides, is still in use on the Sibley farm.



## SAMPLER

Worked by Sally Bemis, daughter of Joseph, granddaughter of Capt. Edmund, and great granddaughter of Samuel Sr. Samplers were very common a century ago and were worked usually by girls from ten to twelve years of age.

3. 4. 4. 4. 4.  
 1. 1. 1. 1. 1.  
 1. 1. 1. 1. 1.  
 1. 1. 1. 1. 1.



## Petition To The General Court June 20, 1757, of William Bemis and John Cunningham.

*To the Hon. Spencer Phipps Esq., Lieut. Gov. and Commander in  
Chief of the Honorable Committee and House of Representatives  
setting in Boston, March 30, 1757.*

The petition of John Cunningham Exr.: of the testament of Hugh Cunningham, late of Spencer in ye county of Worcester humbly shows that the same Hugh in his life time sold to William Bemis two acres and one hundred and thirty-eight perch of meadow lying in said Spencer for five pounds, fifteen shillings lawful money and received the same sum, but died before he could grant a deed and the facts are true Your petitioner prays the said John as Exr. may be empowered by your Honors to execute a proper conveyance of said meadow to said William so that justice may be done and as in duty bound we shall ever pray.

Signed } JOHN CUNNINGHAM,  
          } WILLIAM BEMIS.

In the House of Representatives Apr. 9, 1757, read and ordered that the prayer of this petition be granted and that the same John Cunningham be and hereby is improved in his said capacity to make and execute a good sufficient deed to the said William Bemis of the land within mentioned and that the same be and hereby is declared to be as good and valid in ye law to all intents and purposes whatsoever as if said Hugh Cunningham had made the same in his lifetime.

This land was a portion of the great meadows and adjoined land of Samuel Bemis Sr.

### Town Records.

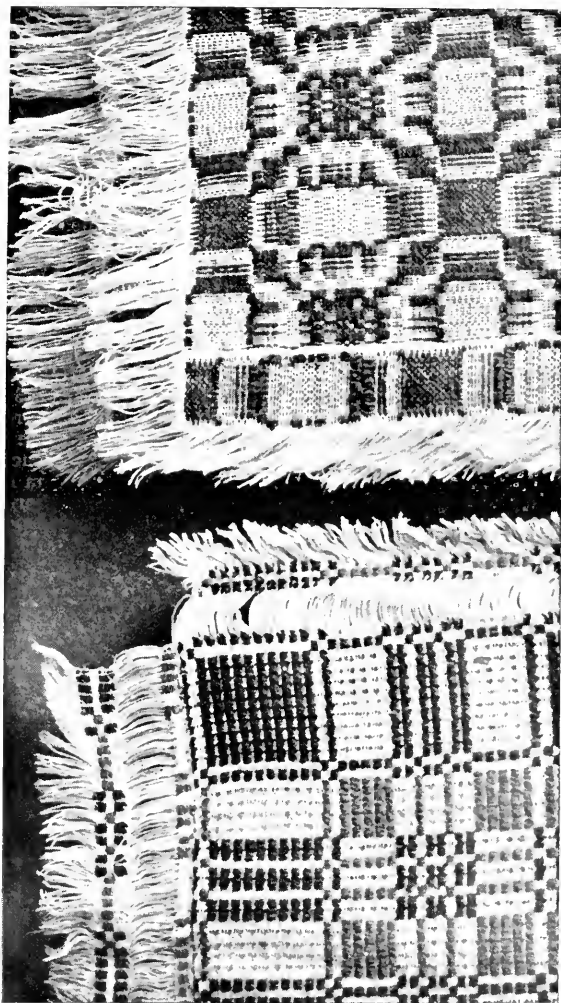
“Taken up and strayed by Benjamin Bemis one Brown Heffer supposed to be two years old with white hind legs up to her body, her tail white half way, white on her rump, and a star on her forehead, some white on her forefeet with small J on horns.” Spencer, Nov. 7, 1757.

At a town meeting held Nov. 25, 1771, Capt. William Bemis, John Bisco, John White Jr. and John Muzzy were appointed to apprise the pews in the new meeting house. This was done and the Bemis family purchased as follows:

	Pew No.	Price
Capt. William Bemis,	1	12lbs 15s
Joshua Bemis,	42	7 “ 5s
Nathaniel Bemis,	29	9 “
Benjamin Bemis,	44	7 “

Voted at a town meeting held June 28, 1773, “that Dea. Oliver Watson, James Ormes, Capt. William Bemis, Asa Baldwin and Moses Livermore be a committee to transact the whole affair relative to the ordination of Rev. Joseph Pope.”

At a town meeting held March 17, 1777, “upon the question being put whether the town would come into the method that is



SPECIMENS OF COVER QUILTS

Made by granddaughters of Samuel Bemis Sr. The one in a square plaid design was made by Catherine (Bemis) Howland, and is now owned by Melinda Howland of Brookfield, the other by Sarah (Bemis) Newhall and owned by the wife of Paul Sibley. Sarah Bemis was the daughter of Jonas Bemis Sr. She married Reuben Newhall and was the mother of Otis Newhall. These quilts were all made from wool grown in Spencer, combed, dyed and spun by those women, and woven by them on hand looms. They are of most excellent workmanship. The father of George A. Craig, Esq., was a maker of spinning wheels, and it is presumed that in his day he made nearly all the wheels sold in this section. When the daughter of a well-to-do farmer was about to be married a "set of Craig's wheels," as they were called, was usually a part of the dowry.

proposed for procuring men to engage in the Continental army for the term of three years or during the war it passed in the affirmative.

Voted that the sum of 20 pounds be given as a bounty to each person that should engage on behalf of the town. The committee by the town to have charge of the matter are Dea. John Muzzy, John Bisco, Capt. Wm. Bemis, Aaron Hunt and John White Jr.

March 1st, 1779. Town committee. Inspectors of the market: Maj. Asa Baldwin, Capt. Ebenezer Mason and Lieut. Benjamin Bemis.

March 1780, Jonas Bemis paid to the town a fine of 40 lbs. for refusing to serve as constable. The above sum probably represents the depreciated currency of the times. In Dec. 1779 one dollar in silver could be exchanged for \$32.50 in Continental bills and this depreciation continued rapidly until the Continental currency was worthless. It is thought about five dollars in silver would represent the amount of the fine.

At a town meeting held March 18, 1780 the following committee was chosen "to hire men if needed to go into the army:" Capt. David Prouty, Lieut. Benjamin Bemis, Lieut. John White, Lieut. Johnathan Rich, Capt. Joshua Draper.

1781 Lieut. Benjamin Bemis elected tithingman.

March 1782, town voted to allow Capt. Benjamin Bemis 3 lbs. for hiring men for the army.

March 1792, town paid Amasa Bemis 1 lb. 16s for "boarding school dame and house room." Paid William Bemis 8 shillings for flax seed to get oil with for the meeting house.

---

Amasa Bemis Sr. died Nov. 21, 1842, aged eighty-five, and his body was placed in the tomb at the old homestead as per his will, but Dexter and Amasa, his sons, concluding to remove to Wisconsin, removed the body to the old cemetery between 1853 and 1855. There was never any other occupant of the tomb except a child named Rawlings, who was placed there temporarily one winter.

---

Edmund Bemis entered one term service in the Colonial army, February 18, 1756, and served until Dec. 25, 1756, forty-four weeks, four days—thirty-eight days travel allowed.

---

Col. Benjamin Bemis commanded a regiment in the war of 1812, and was ordered to the Canadian frontier but did not have an engagement with the British.

### Edmund Bemis Renders a Bill for Services, Etc.

Massachusetts Province to Edmund Bemis, Dr.		
To my subsistence 15 days, making up ye rate at 1-6,	7 <sup>th</sup> lb.	2s. 6d.
To my expenses, 6 days from Spencer to Boston and back again to Spencer,	1 <sup>th</sup> lb.	4s.
To John Chamberlain, found his arm,		12s.
Jonas Bemis, " "		12s.
Deliverance Carpenter " "		12s.
Reuben Clark " "		12s.
Thomas Wood " "		12s.
It. Ephraim Howard " "		12s.
Nathan Hambleton " "		12s.
Eliphalet Hambleton " "		12s.
Ebenezer Davis " "		12s.
Solomon Flag " "		12s.
		<hr/>
		8 <sup>th</sup> lb. 6s. 6d.

Boston, Feb'y 25, 1757.  
Errors excepted.

*Edmund Bemis*

### Extracts from Will of Amasa Bemis Sr.

By this will he says: "I further give and bequeath to my said wife, Nancy Bemis, good and sufficient meats, drinks, clothing, lodging, nursing and doctoring; also good and sufficient firewood furnished and brought into her house at all times suitable for her fire places as she may choose, and in fine to have and be provided with everything she may need and her situation require both in sickness and health for her comfort and convenience so that she may be able to support her rank and standing in society as she has hitherto done while living with me and all this to be done and provided for her by the said Dexter Bemis, my son, during her natural life."

He wills also that "my body is to be placed in the family tomb on my original home farm in Spencer, and I hereby expressly reserve said tomb for a common family tomb with a strip of land two rods in width all around said tomb, and the privilege of passing and repassing thereto at all times. Said tomb to be the common property and for the common use as a burial place for myself and family and for said Foster and Dexter Bemis and their families if they should choose."

### Moved By Oxen.

The old district No. 9 Red schoolhouse was moved by oxen to its present location at Westville, also the Hannah Green and

Danforth Bemis houses from the Samuel Bemis homestead lot. It is not known how many oxen were employed but some idea may be obtained by the fact that when the house now occupied by Daniel W. Adams on Pleasant street was moved about 1842 from near the Sugden block there were sixty yoke of oxen used, made up in two "strings" as they were then called, of thirty yoke each. About every farmer in town came without expense to help at this "moving bee."

---

Amasa Bemis inherited the estate of his father, Joshua, and grandfather, Samuel.

In 1798 the home farm contained	153 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> acres.
Detached land	95 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub> "
Total	249 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> acres
The farm was valued by the assessors at	\$2302 50
Other land	1495 75
House with 80 perch of land	320 00
Long barn 33 x 80	284 00
Square barn 30 x 30	90 00
Total	\$4492 25

There were at this time two sets of assessors, one called the principal assessors, the other called the assistant assessors, each set making independent estimates. They varied considerably on separate items in the above case, but on the total estimates of value, only \$16.26

---

Questions and answers in history asked in 1833 at District No. 2 school:

"Who is President of the United States? Ans. Andrew Jackson.

"Who is Governor of Massachusetts? Ans. Levi Lincoln.

"Who commanded a Spencer company at Crown Point? Ans. Edmund Bemis.

"Who dug the first grave in Spencer? Ans. Edmund Bemis."

---

Nathaniel Sr., Joshua Sr. and William Bemis Sr. each served thirteen days as sentinels on the Western frontier in 1748.

---

Abijah Bemis, founder of what is known as the Paxton branch of the Bemis family, was a nephew of Samuel Bemis Sr. of Spencer. Both had a common ancestor in Joseph Bemis of Waretown.

### Estate of Samuel Bemis Jr.

The following inventory doubtless shows the usual kinds of personal property owned by well-to-do farmers about the year 1800.

Inventory of the estate of Samuel Bemis Jr. late of Spencer deceased.

	lbs. s. d.		lbs. s. d.
1 farm containing 160 acres of land with buildings thereon, 510		1 grindstone and crank	15
5 cows	16 10	1 old plough	6
1 two-year old colt	8	1 shovel	3
6 swine	4	2 scythes and tackling	12 6
1 set of plough	1	Horse tackling	4 6
1 ox sled	3	1 chain	10
2 dung forks	6	1 do	4
2 ox yokes and forms	7	1 adds	5
3 rakes	3	1 hansaw	3
Bull rings and wayes	4	$\frac{1}{2}$ bushil	1 6
1 hoe	1 6	2 sadles	2 16
1 ax	4 6	Wearing apparil	4 9 6
2 augers	2	Woolen yarn	1 6
1 sickle	1 4	Flax	9
1 sieve	6	6 chairs	6
1 basket	1	One shugar box	6
2 yards fulled cloth	8	1 cheap tub	6
Sheeps wool	2 1	1 pail	1 8
1 lantern	3	1 wooden dish	8
2 wooden bottles	2 8	1 meat tub	2
Combed wool	11	1 pickle tub	3
1 churn	1 6	1 cheese hoop	1
2 small tubs	1	Old casks	9 10
1 salt mortar	1 6	1 wool wheile	5 6
Salt meat	1	1 brass kittle	18
12 old cider barrels	17	Iron ware	16
1 cheese press	3	1 crane	2 8
2 old cheese chests	2	1 tosling iron	1
1 flax comb	8	1 puter	2 6
3 milk pans	1 6	Knives and forks	4
1 brass skilet	1	1 table	6
1 yoke oxen	14	Other linnin	7 8
4 yearlings	6	1 feather bed and bedding	40
1 mair and colt	9 12	2 wooden bottles	8
3 calves	2 5	1 iron box	1
1 cart and wheels	2 8	2 bushels of corn	6
		Corn in the barn	4
		Barley	40

	lbs. s. d.		lbs. s. d. f.
Cheese on hand	19	1 broad chisel	6 6
Hay in barn	32	Corn in the field	9 6
1 hive and skins at tannery	19	5 sheep	33
1 looking glass	1	Apples in the orchard	16
Crockery ware	1 2	Boards	7
1 cass of draws	2 4	Cash on hand	42
Table linnin	16	1 note signed by Col. Benj. Bemis, principle and interest	2 3 4 3
1 feather bed and bedding	80		
1 " " "	20		
2 pitching forks	3		666lbs 12s 4s 3f

Spencer, Sept. 14, 1793.

ABIJAH LAMB,  
DAVID ADAMS,  
AMOS ADAMS,

*Appraisers.*

To this account was afterwards added the following items:

	lb. s. d.		lb. s. d.
Sole leather	9	55 lbs. cheese	1 10
A calf skin	10	12 lbs. sole leather	14
1 kid skin	6	A sheep skin	4
47 lbs. butter	39		

The skins mentioned as being at the tannery were presumably at the one operated at that time by Elliot and Joseph Mason and which stood near the site of the present residence of the Cutler Prouty house opposite Sugden block.

The old No. 9 school house not being well located to accommodate the majority of the pupils who lived in the village it was sold, removed to Westville and made into the dwelling now owned by Orin D. Barr. A new No. 9 schoolhouse was built on lower Main street, which in later years was sold and made into a dwelling by the late Thomas Manion.

John and Sylvanus Bemis built about 1820 a small mill on a stream which flows through the meadow between the Joseph Bemis house and the Sprague place. Here they turned bobbins for woolen manufacturers. Sylvanus gained quite a local reputation also as a maker of violins.

### Capt. Edmund Provides for His Old Age.

This Indenture made this twenty-fourth Day of May, A. D. 1796, between Enoch Knapp of Spencer, in the County of Worcester and Commonwealth of Massachusetts, yeomen, on the one part, and Edmund Bemis of Spencer in the County and Commonwealth aforesaid, Gentlemen, on the other part, witnesseth that the said Enoch Knapp in Consideration for a Deed of Sale given him by the said Edmund Bemis of his whole farm not deeded away to his son Joseph, bearing Date with these presents, Doth Lease and to farm let unto the said Edmund Bemis, his heirs, Executors and Administrators, the whole of the farm which the said Edmund Bemis deeded to him May 25, 1796, together with Buildings thereon during the said Edmund's natural life.

To have and to hold from the Day of the Date unto the period above mentioned.

The Conditions of the above Lease is such that if the said Enoch Knapp doth support the above said Edmund Bemis comfortably both in food and clothing, doctoring and nursing in case of sickness, and doth provide all necessary articles for Comfort of the said Edmund Bemis from this Date to the End of his Natural Life, then this Instrument to be void and of none effect otherwise to remain in full force and virtue, in witness hereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal this twenty-fourth Day of May, A. D. 1796, and in the Twenty-first year of the Independence of America.

ENOCH KNAPP.

Signed, Sealed and Delivered in presence of

JOSEPH BEMIS,  
THOS. SPRAGUE.

---

Lyman Bemis owned and operated a wire mill at the Upper Wire Village from 1826 to 1831. He appears to have sold out to Austin Bemis to whom the property was taxed in 1832-33 when the latter died and Wm. Bemis was appointed administrator.



## DISTRICT NO. 9 SCHOOLHOUSE.

---

The old red schoolhouse of district No. 9 stood in the corner of the pasture, across the road, west of where Theodore J. Bemis now lives. This was the place where many who have been leading citizens in Spencer were instructed in their youthful days. Men were usually employed as teachers for the Winter and women for the Summer terms. One teacher, Frank D. Lincoln of Brimfield, afterwards a captain in the War of the Rebellion, is particularly remembered as one of the best teachers of that time.

The following poem was written and published many years ago in the *Oakdale Gleaner*, a random Spencer publication, by one who was a leading girl in the old school days, and perfectly familiar with the scenes she so vividly portrays. The name of the farmer who owned the clover and rye fields was Dea. William Sumner.

### **The Old Red Schoolhouse.**

That old red school house, well do I remember,  
For there my youthful hours I whiled away  
Within its walls, with books and slate so busy,  
Without the door, with schoolmates dear at play.

Each spot within, to memory still how dear,  
The desk so large at which the teacher sat  
With rule and rod that made us quake with fear,  
With nail above for bonnet or for hat.

For largest scholars thirty desks were seen  
And ten low benches for the smaller fry,  
And windows eight, not always whole nor clean,  
But up so high, they kept out curious eye.

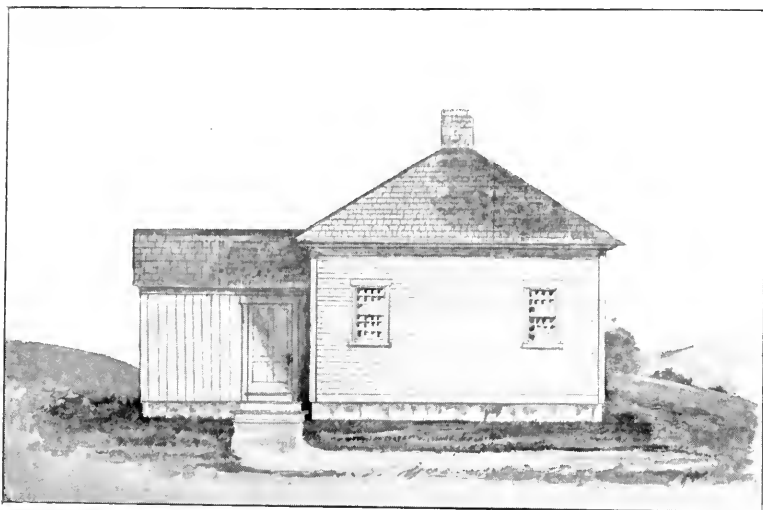
The stove, at which in winter I would linger,  
The black board, where my spirits oft did fail,  
The shelf beside the door, for books and dinner,  
The place for dipper and the water pail.

And those long noonings I can ne'er forget,  
Or the stone houses, where I always played,  
Nor yet the pastures where for flowers and berries  
With my lov'd schoolmates I so oft have strayed.

The spring so prized, with clearest water gushing,  
The hill down which I've had full many a slide,  
The brook through field and meadow ever rushing,  
The pond on which the skater used to slide.

The saw mill, and the cottage standing near it,  
 The worthy owner, oft I've heard him cry,  
 As we through fields of grass and grain were scudding,  
 To "leave my clover," or "get out that rye."

The old red schoolhouse, now it stands deserted,  
 About its doors no children heard at play,  
 The brook, the spring and play house, all neglected,  
 The building now, fast passing to decay.



OLD DISTRICT NO. 9 RED SCHOOL HOUSE AS IT LOOKED IN 1841.

Yet still I love it, and I fain would linger  
 O'er each familiar scene to memory dear,  
 For those lov'd schoolmates, some, I'll wish all blessings,  
 O'er graves of others shed the mourner's tear.

### Interesting Letter.

The following very interesting letter was written to Miss Lucy Merrick of Sturbridge, by her sister who had come to Spencer to teach at this school the spring term of 1841. She evidently was homesick but would not confess it even to herself :

SPENCER, MAY 31st, 1841.

Dear Sister :—

It is but little more than one week since I left home and still it seems as though it was an age, but do not think I am homesick, for I am not really so, but have come very near it once or twice I have a school of fifty-three scholars which is quite as many as I

want, but I have not got them all yet, and when they are all in shall have fifty-five or sixty. It was well for me that I did not know much about the school or I should have never seen Spencer in the capacity of teacher. It is called the worst school in town and last winter their school was very poor. They came very near turning away their teacher and it left their school in a very bad state. As for my boarding place it is not just such an one as I should like, but I will not complain. I board with a widow lady who is a very pleasant woman but has quite a family of children which I think is not quite so pleasant. As for our Sabbaths I know not what to say. Could you be here it would save me the trouble of describing as I cannot find words to express what I wish to say. There are three



MARIA I. MERRICK.

Daughter of Capt. Thomas Merrick, a prominent citizen of Sturbridge and who taught the spring term at the old district No. 9, Red schoolhouse in 1841. Married Henry I. Mellen, Nov. 28, 1846, and settled at Brookfield; mother of Sarah J., present wife of E. Harris Howland. This picture was taken about the time Miss Merrick taught school in Spencer.

boys between the ages of six and ten and they are fighting continually. They need a father's care and correction. I can bear it very well any day but Sunday and then when I am not obliged to be in school I do not wish for the noise of children. My accommodations are not what I could wish. My sleeping room is the parlor and sitting room, and then I cannot have the room to myself but am obliged to have one of the girls sleep with me. You probably recollect the day I left home I expected to have been examined in the afternoon, but Rev'd Mr. Levi Packard (although always

preaching punctuality to others) forgot to be punctual himself and I was therefore obliged to defer it until Monday afternoon. I called at Dr. Aaron Green's and waited two hours for him, but he had forgotten that he had an engagement and therefore did not call. I got along very well, did not miss one question, but when I began to parse did not get the sense of the piece and got somewhat puzzled and instead of helping me at all, sat and laughed at me, which I called rather provoking, but it is all over with and the most I dread now is the first visit to my school. I expected them this afternoon but they have not been. I have two of Mrs. Cheney Sumner's children, (she that was Mary Coy of Brimfield), that attend school and they are as pretty as any scholars in school. I have called on Mrs. Sumner and she seems like an old acquaintance although I do not recollect ever seeing her before. She wishes to be remembered to you all. My boarding place is so far from the schoolhouse that I cannot go there at noon and I find a very pleasant place to call at widow William Sumner's the nearest house to the schoolhouse. She appears very glad to have me call and invites me to come every day. I happened to meet a friend to-day very unexpectedly as I was coming to school not thinking of seeing any one that I knew. I saw a carriage and whom should be in it but Col Estabrook. He appeared to be very glad to see me and thought I must have got lost to be so far from home. My health is very good excepting a very hard cough, and what to do for it I do not know, as I keep getting a little more cold and it keeps me coughing almost all the time. I shall begin to think it necessary to know how to dance if I stay in Spencer long as they are continually having "scrapes" as they call them. There have been two since I came here and the widow's daughter attended them, so you see I have an opportunity to lend things to wear if I do not go myself. But it is now almost six o'clock and I have not been home to tea and my stomach begins to tell me it is tea time, but I dread starting for after I have sat a few moments I can tell how tired I am when I get up. I can find but little time to sit in school and when I get through am obliged to walk more than half a mile to my boarding place, all up hill. My schoolhouse is large and a very good one except it is very dirty. I think I shall wash it some day when school does not keep. I saw Miss Robinson at church yesterday. She is at work for Mr. Gerry Russ. One of the widow's daughters has gone to-day to commence learning the trade at his clothier's shop. I presume you have forgotten to send me some papers but I have not. Do write as soon as you get this and send as many papers as you can. Tell Alfred a Philadelphia paper would be acceptable. I get but very little to read here and what I do get is not worth much. My best love to all who inquire and if any one asks how I like tell them *first rate*, because I should dislike to have it said I was homesick, you know. Tell mother I should like to step in and take tea with her to-night, but think I shall defer it till I get through with my school, as I should enjoy it better if I had not got to come back again. Tell Dexter to write to me as I wish to know how he is prospering in his worldly affairs. Excuse this bad looking letter as I have written in great haste. I will write a better one next time.

From your affectionate sister,

MARIA L. MERRICK.

The postage on this letter from Spencer to Sturbridge was six cents. The postal rates at that time were not only much higher than now but prepayment was optional. The author re-

members a story told by his father, who was a musician and frequently employed to play the clarinet at dances in the surrounding towns by a teacher of dancing named "Tomson"—that was the way he spelled his name. Mr. Tomson was quite a penurious man and when he sent a mail order for an engagement never prepaid the postage. At one time he sent an order, as usual, and not getting an immediate reply, thought the letter had miscarried and wrote again. In his last communication he said: "If you got my first letter all right you can save the postage on this one by not taking it out of the office."

---

At a town meeting held March 24, 1767, it was "voted to Nathaniel Bemis, late constable, six shillings on account of a counterfeit dollar which he took accidentally in collecting the Province tax."

---

### Literary Curiosity.

The following is inserted simply as a curiosity. Some years ago a New York paper offered six equal prizes to those who should write the best contributions on the weather, containing two hundred words without the letter *a*. The author was one of some four hundred competitors and won a prize.

#### "The Tempest."

"It is dusk upon the bluffs of the little hillside town which overlooks the rocky, precipitous shores of the mighty deep below. The storm king is enthroned. The spirit of violence is running riot. Every soul is hushed with feelings of the deepest solicitude for the elements portend sudden destruction. The fierce tempestuous wind sweeps swiftly through the deserted streets or speeds wildly over the surging billows, shrieking weird solemn requiems over the perishing. Everywhere dense, ominous clouds moving with tremendous energy, writhing in endless contortions, betoken the coming cyclone. The condensed moisture of worlds seems to be suspended over the defenceless town. Like the deluge of old it is poured forth in furious floods. It rushes down the steep declivities in impetuous torrents uprooting huge trees or undermining immense boulders in its resistless course. Shooting through the skies on their mission of destruction, the vivid lightnings, in quick succession, pierce the gloom with flickering light. The booming, bursting thunder, with its grumbling, grinding, noise, seems to be ushering in the knell of doom, while the universe like some tiny reed before the wind seems to be on the very brink of dissolution."



Frank W. Harry E. Fred A. Albert L. Dr. Alonzo Amasa Edgar W.  
 Walter C. Mrs. Ella M. Jones Edwin Amasa Mrs. Julia D. W. Bemis Anna J. Wallace L.  
 FAMILY OF EDWIN AMASA AND JULIA DRAPER WATSON BEMIS.

An old time New England family as to size.

(Taken in 1886.)

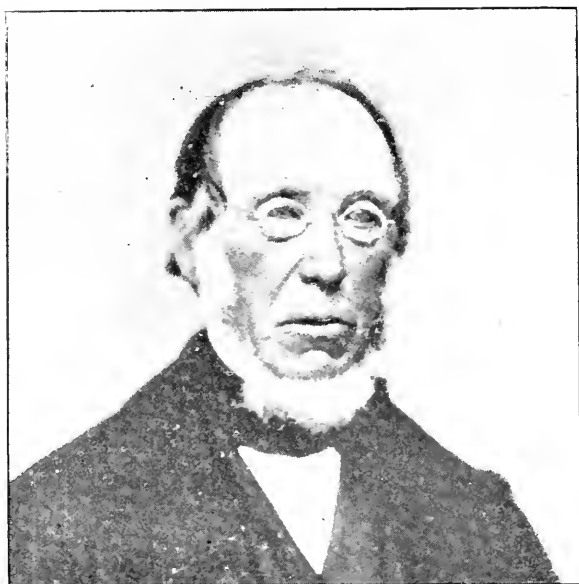
## HISTORY OF THE SPENCER BOOT AND SHOE PEG INDUSTRY.

---

Between the years 1825 and 1840, there were four peg factories in Spencer run by water power and another one contemplated by Napoleon B. Prouty for erection near the Horace Baldwin place. Mr. Prouty had the dam partially built but for some unknown reason abandoned the enterprise. Peg making at its inception was a very primitive industry, the birch log first being sawed into blocks the right length for the pegs, then marked with a pencil into squares of the right dimensions and then with a long, straight knife and a mallet, split to size. All that was now needed to complete the peg was to point one end and this was usually done with a jackknife. In those days about every boot maker, or cobbler as we would now call them, made his own pegs and when, in 1812, Josiah Green commenced making pegged boots on the wholesale plan he made what pegs he used, chiefly evenings after his regular day's work was done. By 1825 there had been developed in this section quite a demand for pegs to supply Mr. Green, Isaac Prouty and the Batchellers of North Brookfield, who had, for the times, become quite extensive manufacturers of boots. A more rapid way of producing the pegs was sought and found, by the use of a hand plane with a V cutter attached, which making one groove at a time on the block of wood and one groove following another there was soon made a succession of them covering the entire surface; then the block was grooved again at right angles and when completed presented rows of peg points which by the use of a knife and chisel were quickly split into a merchantable product. This was the method in use when Alpha Bemis about 1825 built the first peg factory in Spencer on what was then known as Pigeon Brook and later as Cranberry Meadow Brook, a stream flowing from Cranberry Meadow Pond by Howe's Mills and into the Seven Mile river near the present filter beds. The Alpha Bemis mill pond was on the stream southwest of the railroad and two hundred and twenty rods from Cranberry Meadow Pond. There had been a dam built and a grist mill erected here as early as 1813, and a wire mill in operation as early as 1816, since on Jan. 10, 1817, "Elijah Howe, carpenter, of

Spencer, for 12 dollars paid me by Alpha Bennis of said Spencer," sold all his "right in and unto a certain building called a wire factory, with all the apparatus and privileges of every kind which belongs to said factory. Said factory is situated in the south westerly part of said Spencer on Pigeon Brook, so called, and on land belonging to Jonas Bemis."

In the running of this peg factory at that date there were probably employed as a regular force from two to three men, as



JOHN BEMIS.

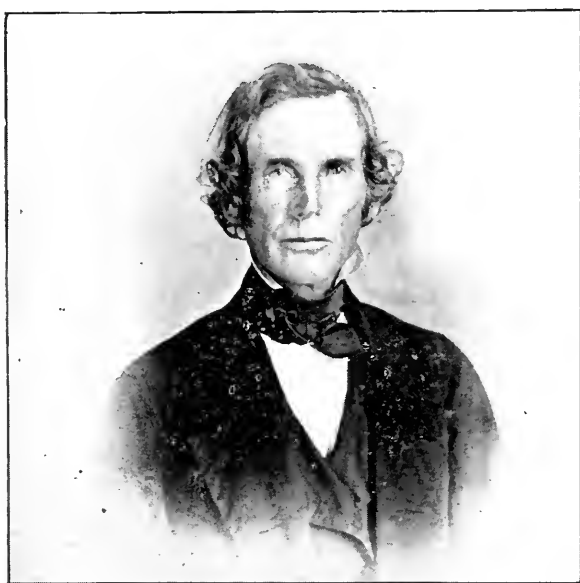
Farmer, born in Spencer, March 6, 1792; died in Spencer, June 28, 1881. Son of Nathan Bemis Sr. and great grandson of Samuel Bemis Sr. Original inventor of rotary peg cutting machinery.

many young women, and a boy. Ruel Jones and Winthrop Livermore are known to have worked there and also two or more young women by the name of Converse and a boy named Napoleon B. Prouty.

This boy became a life-long peg maker, and it may be well here to speak of his earlier history. The father, William Prouty, in 1798 married Lydia Hatch and kept a small store on upper Main street. Thinking to improve his opportunity for acquiring wealth, he removed to New York City and engaged in the same business. It was here that Napoleon B. was born,



Feb. 24, 1810. About 1814 Mrs. Prouty separated from her husband and returned to Spencer with five children, and then Napoleon went to live with his grandfather, Isaac. At the age of fifteen we find him learning the art of peg making at the mill of Alpha Bemis, and presumably living in his family. This factory had not been in operation but two or three years when John Bemis, father of Theodore J. Bemis, conceived the idea of a rotary peg cutter, and after some experimenting, succeeded in developing a practical machine and thus became the pioneer inventor of power peg cutting machinery. He at once utilized the basement of the



PLINY SNOW.

Spencer Peg Manufacturer. Father of John W. Snow of Leicester.

Nathan Bemis saw mill as a workshop and commenced the manufacture of pegs by the improved process. He hired Napoleon B. Prouty, then about twenty years of age, as a foreman, and also two sisters by the name of Witt, Laura and Clara, from Huntington, the latter becoming later the wife of Mr. Prouty. Business with Mr. Bemis was good and at one time he employed eight persons, but for some unknown reason continued the business only two or three years when we find he had abandoned the same and was busily engaged in placing his machines in other factories and

teaching men how to operate them. Presumably he had done this for Alpha Bemis, and now we find him fitting up a peg factory for Pliny Snow, on the Shaw Pond brook near the house of the late William Robinson. Previous to this Mr. Snow had been drawing wire at his little mill and had in his employ one of the most expert wire drawers in the country, with a prospect ahead of an extending and profitable business. Ichabod Washburn, then a small wire manufacturer in Worcester, had heard of this ex-



DANIEL BALL.

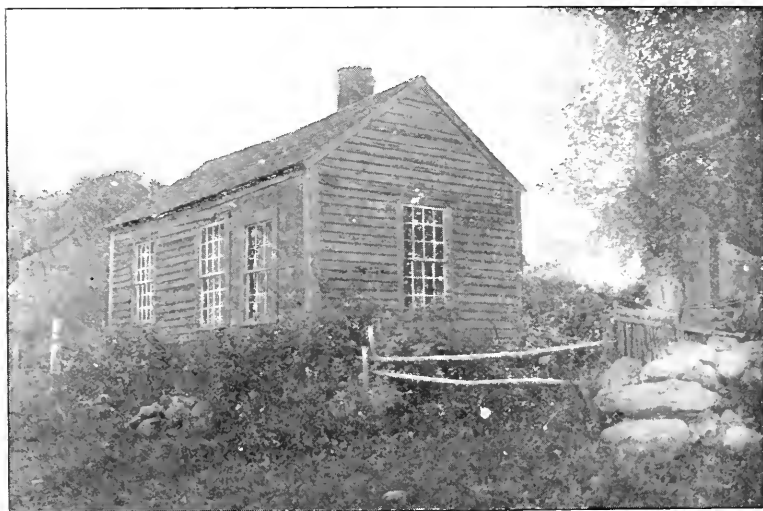
Peg and Last Manufacturer at North Spencer. His father and grandfather Ball were both named Daniel. His father was constable and collector in 1801-2 in the town of Spencer, north of the Great Post road, for which he received for his services .01½ per cent in 1801 and .02 per cent in 1802.

After he sold his peg factory to Zenas Draper he built a small shop for making lasts by hand, which is now standing, the last building on the right hand side on the road going from North Spencer to Browning pond.

pert mechanic and was determined to secure his services, which he did, and this so discouraged Mr. Snow that he determined to quit the business, arguing with himself that there were already men enough in it to supply any probable demand. He therefore took out all of his wire drawing appliances, stored the same in his

barn and got ready to make pegs. He hired Napoleon B. Prouty, who purchased a house near by and prepared to commence business. Ruel Jones was also engaged and two sisters by the name of White, one of whom, Laurinda, later became the wife of Mr. Jones.

At about the same time, Daniel Ball, built a peg factory on a small stream at North Spencer. This was the smallest of the four factories. By 1838 it is thought the manufacture of pegs in Spencer ceased, from the most natural of causes and one, which



THE DANIEL BALL PEG FACTORY.

Which was built on a small stream at North Spencer, northwest from the village toward Browning pond. After peg making became impracticable through lack of a supply of suitable timber, he sold the building to Zenas Draper who moved it to a lot just north of the present residence of Amasa T. Bemis. The window on the side having large panes of glass was not in the building originally.

seems almost incredible, should not have been foreseen by the promoters of this industry, namely, a lack of timber. The supply, never very large, was soon exhausted, and the manufacturers of pegs had to seek new fields in which to pursue their avocation. Alpha Bemis did not purpose going out of the peg business, but on Aug. 22, 1837 purchased a saw and grist mill at Royalston, in which he had been making pegs for several years, and in a section where there was a bountiful supply of birch timber. He entered into partnership with Silas Jones, a citizen of Royalston, and the peg business was there carried on under the firm name of

Bemis & Jones. Ruel Jones also went to Royalston as a foreman in this factory, Mr. Bemis all the while living in Spencer. How long this partnership continued cannot now be determined.

The first pegs made in Spencer were at the Alpha Bemis peg factory, and the last ones, according to Joel Howe, were made at the same place from timber hauled overland from Royalston. The making of pegs at the Pliny Snow factory was abandoned before 1838, at which time it was in use by Otis Newhall as a place for turning posts for bedsteads, and later was demolished and an up-and-down saw mill erected. Daniel Ball about 1837 sold his mill to Zenas Draper, a carpenter and grandfather of Deputy Sheriff Henry P. Draper, who purchased a lot just north of the present residence of Amasa T. Bemis. He loaded the mill onto a low truck, having small wheels, and secured the co-operation of his friends for its removal. Agreeable to promise they came quite early one morning with twelve yoke of oxen and the mill was soon on its way to its present location. It took two days to complete the task, having at the close of the first day reached the valley below the Pliny Allen place. Zenas Draper fitted up the building as a carpenter shop where he did odd work and made wooden boot cases for Draper & Hall in Spencer village and later for his brother-in-law, William A. Draper, at Worcester. After a time making boxes by hand in such a small way became unprofitable and putting on an addition to his shop he converted the whole into a dwelling.

After John Bemis had taught his improved methods to all the peg makers in this section, he took his family, moved to Athol and there instructed Abraham and Ira Oakes, peg makers, who had established a factory in 1825 and continued to operate it for thirty years. His stay with them was about three years when his services were sought by parties at Muddy Brook, Connecticut, a small hamlet in Windham County, about six miles south of Dudley and presumably in a region of large birches. He engaged with them and with his family moved to this new field of labor, when after a stay of about three years, he returned to the home of his boyhood and settled down to the life of a farmer. Had he patented his invention he might have secured quite a fortune for those days.

Napoleon B. Prouty made pegs for a time at Woodstock, Connecticut, before his engagement with Pliny Snow, and soon after the latter ceased to operate his factory, moved to Chester near Huntington, his wife's home. Here he went into partnership with a man named Day and continued some years, when in connection with a son he established a separate business under the name of N. B. Prouty & Son. Here he was successful and con-

tinued in the business until the infirmities of age obliged him to relinquish its cares. He always held, however, a portion of Spencer trade and Thomas A. Prouty says when he kept store he used to purchase pegs of him, a hundred bushels at a time.

His daughter, Sarah J. Prouty of New Hartford, Ct., writes August 28, 1901, concerning her father, Napoleon: "He had an undercurrent of dry humor and in his younger days was fond of a joke and liked a good story immensely. Once during a severe



NAPOLÉON BONAPARTE PROUTY,

Born in New York, Feb. 10, 1810. Died at Chester, Mass., April 13, 1896. The veteran peg manufacturer learned the trade in Spencer when a youth and followed the business until old age.

storm he told a young lady he never knew it to rain but once and not clear off, with such an air of a story to tell, that she involuntarily asked: 'When was that?' He used frequently to relate the quaint stories of his grandfather Isaac and other Spencer worthies with a gusto that was more amusing than the stories themselves, but years of ill health made him at last sober and retiring. He always retained a strong affection for his boyhood home and many Spencer names are as familiar as household words, they were so often on his lips. He was neat in person, gentle and courteous in

manner, peaceful in disposition, honest and upright in heart, painstaking in business and prompt and honorable in his dealings with mankind."



RUEL JONES,

Son of Josiah Jones, born Jan. 20, 1813; married to Laurinda White, Oct. 11, 1838; died April 4, 1888. This half tone is from a picture taken at marriage. He was a school teacher, peg maker, wooden box manufacturer and farmer. After the powder mills on Moose Pond brook exploded, he built a small building near the old wheel pit and made wooden boxes for boots, probably for Chas. E. Denny. The building was destroyed by fire within about two years after its erection. This little mill pond has, since then, always been called Ruel's pond. In his earlier years he taught school to some extent, and is said by Henry H. Kingsbury to have been a most excellent teacher. It is the consensus of opinion of our older citizens that Mr. Jones had better natural gifts as a debater than any other man Spencer has produced in the last one hundred years. Before he became bent with age he could always be depended on to take a leading part in town meetings; discussing intelligently almost all debatable questions. He was a most persistent advocate of generous appropriations for the public schools. He was a man unusually well read, in debate quick and skillful at repartee, and his illustrations were generally to the point. In the days of the Washingtonian temperance movement he is said to have made some very creditable temperance addresses. To illustrate his versatility of thought it is related of him that at one time in town meeting the question of building a new schoolhouse on Pleasant street was up for consideration. Mr. Jones was well along in years, lived on a farm on an unfrequented road and was not posted on modern methods of heating school houses by steam generated in the cellar. The estimates of expense for this schoolhouse had been read and included an item for a cellar. Mr. Jones immediately arose and asked if he understood that a cellar was asked for. He was answered in the affirmative: "Mr. Moderator," said he, "I don't understand what this means. I should as soon think of building an attic to a tomb as putting a cellar under a schoolhouse." At another time after the Town of Spencer had acquired the control of the Spencer branch R. R., and the question came up for regrading the roadbed, he spoke in favor of the question as a measure of safety to the traveling public, and said: "The roadbed is now so crooked, you couldn't not run a wheelbarrow over it without running it off the track." His presence, voice and gestures are needed, however, to make the thoughts as alive as they appeared to be to the hearers.

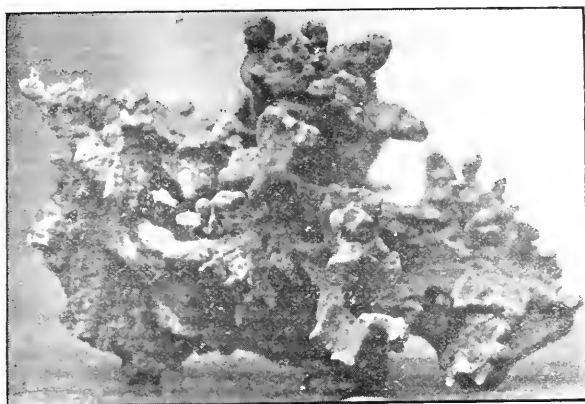
# HISTORY OF FIRST CHURCH BELL IN SPENCER.

---

The bell was ordered in 1801, just a hundred years ago, and Dexter Bullard Esq. remembers that the date 1801 was cast on the bell. It was not hung probably until the summer of 1802 as a tower had to be built on the Congregational church for its reception. The records which follow, largely explain themselves:

## "Preamble."

*"Proposals of Subscriptions for a Bell.*—Whereas, much has been said by divers persons at one time and another about having a Tower Cupola and bell to the meeting house in Spencer, but



PIECE OF THE OLD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH BELL.

Which was melted in the fire of January 1, 1862, and donated to the Spencer Museum by Nathan Hersey.

nothing has hitherto been done by any person to bring forward the matter, and as a tower cupola and bell will be both useful and ornamental to the town, therefore for the promoting and bringing forward the same, We, the subscribers whose names are hereunto

annexed are willing to advance as much money as we hereunto annex to our names respectively, for the sole purpose of purchasing a bell upon the following conditions; that is, if the Town will come into any measures such as they may think most conducive to their peace and interest, whereby a Tower Cupola shall be built and finished, that the payment of the money by us respectively subscribed shall be secured to the town treasurer for the time being by our Respective Notes or Obligations, which shall become due and payable immediately after the Tower Cupola shall be raised before the first day of September in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and three or otherwise to be void and of no effect. In witness whereof we hereunto subscribe our names and sums annexed in dollars and cents :

Spencer, March, 1801.

Silas Allen	\$5 00	Moses Livermore	3 00
Ivory Allen	1 00	Enoch Ludden	1 17
Levi Baldwin	1 00	Ebenezer Mason	1 50
Daniel Ball	1 10	Eliot Mason	12 00
David Barnes Jr.	7 25	Betty Mason	1 50
Ezekiel Baxter	10 00	William May	4 00
Richard Beers Jr.	5 00	Caleb Morse	6 50
David Bemis	5 00	Amos Munrow	5 00
Amasa Bemis	7 00	Johnathan Monrow	15 00
William Bemis	10 50	John Muzzy	7 50
Nathan Bemis	8 00	Jonas Muzzy	9 99
Jesse Bemis	3 00	Edmund Muzzy	6 00
John Bisco Sr.	11 00	Reuben Newhall	2 00
John Bisco Jr.	5 00	David Prouty	10 00
Jacob Bisco	4 00	Nathan Prouty	10 00
Elijah Bridges	1 00	Isaac Prouty Jr.	7 00
John Butler	11 00	Eli Prouty	4 50
Timothy Capen	3 00	Seth Snow	3 00
James Capen Jr.	1 00	Thomas Sprague	5 00
Gersham Comings	3 00	John Stebbins	20 00
Jedediah Cutter	3 00	John Sumner	7 00
John Draper	5 25	William Sumner	3 00
Benj. Drury	10 00	Reuben Underwood	5 00
Eben Drury Jr.	1 00	John Upham	5 00
Jonas Guilford	5 00	Oliver Watson Jr.	10 00
John and Samuel Gleason	5 50	Samuel Watson	6 00
Moses Hall	5 00	William Watson	9 00
Elisha Harrington	16 01	Jacob Watson	7 00
James Hathaway	5 00	James Watson	5 00
Shadrach Hathaway	2 00	William White	15 00
Kerley How	6 00	Thomas White	10 00
Elijah How Jr.	5 00	Samuel White	1 00



Isaac Jenks	12 00	Nathan and David White	4 00
Ruth Jenks	5 00	Reuben Whittemore	8 55
John Knapp	6 00	Jeremiah Whittemore	6 00
Isaac Lamb	10 00		
Josiah Q. Lamb	3 00		\$443 82

The foregoing is a true copy of the articles of subscription and the names in alphabetical order with the sums annexed.

JOHN BISCO,

*Collector of the Subscription.*

To pay for the Tower the town voted Aug. 24, 1801, "to grant the sum of three hundred dollars for the purpose of building the tower and cupola to the meeting house in said town to be taxed on the polls and estates of those that are taxed to the minister of said town."

The balance of the money needed was secured by sale of floor space in the meeting house on which to build pews. There were four spaces set apart for this purpose and sold at auction Aug. 24, 1801. Joseph Garfield bought space No. 1, for which he paid \$120.00. Silas Bemis paid the same amount for space No. 2, being the "first pew ground on the left hand of the broad alley and gave security agreeable to conditions of sale." Eli Prouty bid off space No. 3, Thomas Loring No. 4, price not given.

At a town meeting held March 7, 1803, it was "voted that the subscription for the bell with the subscribers' names be recorded on the town book." "Voted April 10, 1803, to have the Bell rung twice a day, viz: at twelve o'clock and nine in the evening and on the Sabbaths as usual, and toled at funerals, etc., and to be left with the selectmen to employ some person for that purpose. The selectmen have agreed with Mr. Josiah Q. Lamb to perform said service for one year for \$19.91."

JOHN BISCO, *Moderator.*

BENJ. DRURY,

JONAS MUZZY,

JAMES WATSON,

*Selectmen of Spencer.*

John Bisco, Town Treasurer in 1802, credits himself with the following payments, made on account of the bell and cupola by paying selectmen's orders as follows:

Order 35. Paid Daniel Ball twenty-five dollars for money advanced for raising Tower.

Order 47. Paid Nathan Wilson ten dollars for money advanced for raising the Tower and Cupola.

Order 55. Paid Daniel Ball three dollars for his services in underpinning the Tower.

- Order 56. Paid Isaac Jenks \$38.61 for entertainment, Raising the Tower.
- Order 77. Johnathan Winslow \$6.00 for his service and Ropes to Raise the Bell.
- Order 78. Elisha Harrington \$4.00 for money advanced in Raising the Tower.
- Order 83. William Knight Jr. \$15.00 for Iron work done to the Bell.
- Order 88. Wm. Knight Jr. \$2.50 for making spikes for Raising the Tower.
- Order 94. Josiah Q. Lamb \$7.30 for hanging the Bell.
- Order 95. Elijah How Jr. \$4.00 for his providing timber for the Bell Frame.
- Order 96. William Knight Jr. \$5.00 for work done for the Tower.
- Order 105. Jonas Muzzy \$5.00 in part for his service of underpinning the Tower.
- Order 117. Josiah Q. Lamb \$5.49 for service done for the Tower
- Order 119. Jonas Muzzy \$3.00 for his purchasing a rope for the Bell.
- Order 120. Jonas Muzzy \$112.57 for sheet lead.
- Order 121. Joshua Lamb \$5.00 for extra service about the Tower and Cupola.
- Order 130. Paid Baxter & Lamb \$600.00 for Building the Tower and Cupola to the meeting house.
- And in 1803:
- Order 41. Wm. Knight Jr. \$8.00 for Iron for the Bell and Tower.

About noon Jan. 1, 1862, the church caught fire from a superheated stove and was totally destroyed. The bell was melted and a piece of the same picked up the next day by Nathan Hersey who donated it to the museum in 1874.

## PEAR STORY OF EBENEZER MASON JR.

---

Ebenezer Mason Jr's story of the stolen pears, related to the author by his grandmother, Betsey (Beers) Adams, who received it from her aunt Sally, wife of Mr. Mason:

Somewhat over a hundred years ago Ebenezer Mason Jr. kept a tavern in what is now known as the Mason house in

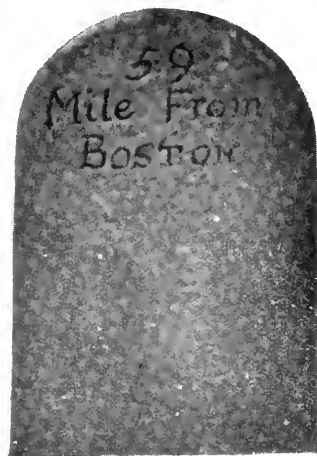


BETSEY BEERS.

Daughter of Richard Beers Jr. and granddaughter of Beulah Bemis, daughter of Samuel Bemis Jr. Born in Spencer, Jan. 7, 1769; died in Spencer, Sept. 8, 1874. She married Levi Adams of Brookfield. Mother of the late Rosamond D. Tower and of Daniel W. Adams of Pleasant street.

the Isaac Prouty & Co.'s shop yard and just fifty-nine miles from Boston, according to the sandstone marker in front of the

house underneath the big elms. These stones were erected by order of the General Court in 1771, a mile apart between Boston and Springfield. This was a busy place in those days,



when nearly all the travel through the state, east and west, passed along the Great Post Road. Mr. Mason not only kept tavern but also had a tannery across the road and near the Moose pond brook. The ground east of his house was used as a garden and in this he had, some twenty feet away, two pear trees of quite large growth. In those days pear trees were not plentiful and none of the fruit was for sale. Every man, if he had pears, must grow them or else go without; that is, as a rule. One fall these trees were loaded with fruit nearly ripe, and presented a tempting picture to the eye. One dark night in September Mr. Mason, who slept up-

stairs on the east side of the house, heard an unusual rustling of leaves, and on listening at the open window ascertained that some one was in the pear tree. Hastily dressing and getting his lantern under his great coat he was soon underneath the tree and had a thief treed. He spoke kindly to him and asked if he was picking the best of the pears, and advised him to do so, if such was not the case. All was quiet but in a short time the thief, doubtless thinking it the best way to do, slowly descended and was soon standing beside Mr. Mason with nearly a half bushel of pears in his basket. To Mr. Mason's surprise he saw one of the leading men of the town, a man of wealth and one whose character was above suspicion. Now, said this man, I am ready to settle. Let me off as reasonably as you can, but for no amount of money would I have it known that you caught me in the act of stealing. Well, said Mr. Mason, I can't take your money and you are welcome to the pears, and you must take them home with you, but this much I will do, as long as I live I will tell the story but never reveal your name, and he kept his word. Within a few days the town was busy guessing who the thief could be, but no more was ever known; and this is doubtless one of the finest examples of heaping coals of fire on a neighbor's head, that ever occurred in the town of Spencer.

When the Great Post Road through Spencer was resurveyed and in many places straightened and rebuilt by the county in

1856, a large quantity of land and rock was taken from the north side of the road near the late Calvin Kent house and dumped in the valley below, from Mechanic to Wall streets. This raised the road in some places some six feet and in the filling-in process the milestone became buried out of sight. Some years afterward Jeremiah Grout, a public-spirited citizen living near by, determined to resurrect the stone and did so, employing to do the work one John



THE MASON HOUSE,

Spencer village, built by Capt. Ebenezer Mason, who marched from  
Spencer with a company of minutemen on the alarm of  
April 19, 1775. For many years it was known as  
the Mason tavern.

Hart, a Frenchman, long in his service as a gardener and general all-around out-doors workman. Soon after the stone was once more in position as a marker of distance, a middle-aged Spencer woman came walking down Main street on the south side and noticing the milestone opposite stopped to inquire of one of our most prominent business men then passing if he knew who was "buried over there." "Strange," said she, "that I never should have seen that headstone before." He dryly told her there was an inscription on the stone which would give her the information desired; so over she went and read it to the enlargement of her understanding and the mortification of her pride.



HORATIO HALL,

Born in Spencer, Aug. 12, 1806 and died Oct. 20, 1891. He was a communicant of the Congregational church longer than any other member living and was a lifelong, consistent example of temperate living. He followed nearly all his active life the avocation of a boot maker and from about 1833 to 1838 was engaged with William A. Draper in manufacturing boots under the firm name of Draper & Hall, with a place of business over what was then a store owned by Walton Livermore on what is now the corner of Main and North streets. The firm became insolvent during the great financial crisis of 1837, and failed for nine thousand dollars. Unlike many they did not try to effect a compromise with their creditors but said to them if they could have time they would try to liquidate their indebtedness and this they were enabled to do by the close of the following year. This half tone is from a photograph taken by Chas. F. Pond in 1900.

## SPENCER DISTILLERIES.

---

The manufacture of gin, and probably one or more other kinds of distilled liquors, was commenced in Spencer in 1813 on quite a large scale for the times. The incentive for inaugurating this line of business probably lay in what appear to be the facts, which are as follows, positive information in regard to all points being unattainable: Prior to the War of 1812 with England, the principal liquors used in New England were West India rum, and New England rum, so-called, distilled from molasses brought from the West Indies. At the opening of the war in the fall of 1812, nearly if not quite all our available shipping fitted out as cruisers to prey on the enemy's commerce, thus shutting off the usual method of transportation between the West Indies and New England. It also appears probable that our ships, after the declaration of war became known, could not have obtained a cargo in the West Indies had they so desired, nor would the English have dared to have sent a vessel into our waters.

### **Bad Effect of the Drink Habit.**

Thus it seems to be certain that there was a shortage of rum in New England as early as the spring of 1813, and no remedy at hand except to make liquors from some other substance, for liquor certainly was in sharp demand, presumably to supply men who in those days, even as now, would freely sacrifice the most desirable of earthly possessions in order to satisfy their appetite for strong drink, and doubtless there were as many more younger men thoughtlessly ready to follow their example. Besides there were many men of exemplary character and strong wills who were moderate drinkers, for at this time, the evils flowing from the use of intoxicants had not in any appreciable degree excited public attention, nor the dangers of the moderate use of liquors hardly discerned, and so the best sentiment of those days allowed the moderate use of liquor, from the clergy down, as a phase of correct living beyond criticism. It is certain that there was an unusual demand for alcoholic liquors at this time, a short supply, high prices and a ready sale for such kinds as could be produced.

### **Two Large Distilleries.**

It was at such a time and under such circumstances as these that two distilleries were erected in Spencer. These were in size

about thirty by forty-five, one story besides a basement and both very high studded. Phineas Jones was the proprietor of one that stood near the Thomas G. Trott place and Alpha Bemis owner of the other, which was built at the foot of what afterwards became known as Still Hill in the valley east of the railroad and the town's highway, and south of Pigeon or Cranberry Meadow Brook, as it flows along just after passing underneath the railroad above Howe's Mills. Large barns were also built near by in which to keep cattle that were fed the by-products. Grist mills either had been built for general use or else were built but a short distance away for use during some process of the preparation of the grain. At the Phineas Jones distillery, the late well known citizens, Alonzo Temple and Nathan Craig, were employed, each on an alternate service of twelve hours as the still must needs run night and day. It appears that these distilleries became a sort of an evening rendezvous for the drinking men of the surrounding section, and that some from over indulging in the use of the liquor there on sale became hilarious and at times noisy. On this account it was arranged that Nathan Craig, who was very deaf and insensible to ordinary noises, should sleep from bedtime until midnight when he would arise and take up the work relinquished by Alonzo Temple. Gin was one of the principal liquors distilled and this was made from rye with the essential oil of the juniper berry to give it color and flavor.

### **Farmer Sacrifices Education for Drink.**

These berries grew quite plentifully in the pastures of the town and a certain fairly well-to-do farmer kept his boys from school in order to pick these berries which he exchanged for gin for his own consumption. Nathan Craig, who was a highly honorable citizen, noting this, said, "If ever I get so debauched in my mind as to consent that my children be deprived of an education in order that I may have liquor to drink, I hope the Lord will take them away from me." As it has ever been, the presence of distilleries of ardent spirits or their free sale in any community lowers its moral tone, so it proved to be in this case and a great many of the best families in Spencer were glad when these stills were abandoned and possibly the owners were too; as it is known that later Alpha Bemis became a staunch advocate of total abstinence. It is thought by some that what in this article has been called the Alpha Bemis distillery was really owned and operated by a company of individuals, but the late Hiram Howe a few days before his recent death said Alpha Bemis was the sole owner, and in the absence of other equally good and positive testimony, his declaration will probably be accepted as the truth. After the



treaty of peace in 1815 distilling in Spencer became unprofitable and was soon abandoned.

Following the suspension of distilling, the use for which the buildings had been erected, ceased, and they stood without a purpose for many years except as a place for general storage, and were finally torn down and utilized in the construction of other buildings. The Alpha Bemis distillery building was leased by a man named Mason and operated as a boarding house for railroad workmen, about 1835-6-7 or during the years that the then Western Railroad was being built through the town. About twelve rods from the dam in the Alpha Bemis mill lot and nearby the location of the distillery, is a boulder, shaped somewhat like the Egyptian pyramids. Over this stone was built a bakery, or bakery and house combined, when the construction of the above railroad was first begun in this town. Built up against the south side of this boulder, and with the chimney resting partly on it, was a brick oven about six feet long, four feet wide and five feet high. This stood for some years after the building had been removed, and portions of the brick comprising the foundation may still be seen imbedded in the ground.

### **Indian Burial Ground.**

Still hill refers wholly to the road running easterly from Still valley up an incline of nearly a hundred perpendicular feet. This used to be the favorite coasting place for the boys and girls of that neighborhood. The top of the hill is nearly on a level with the railroad, and it is here on the plain, two or three hundred feet towards South, Spencer that the only Indian burial ground in Spencer is known to exist. When the railroad was being built there were three engineers in charge of the section through Spencer and they boarded with Abraham Capen Sr., a prosperous farmer living nearby and father of Abraham Capen, our present townsman. The railroad passed through this level and sandy piece of land, on which trees seem unwilling to grow, making a cut of from four to five feet. It was here that skeletons were found, and with them many stone implements such as the Indians bury with their dead. The three skeletons first exhumed were in an excellent state of preservation and were taken on boards to the grounds of Mr. Capen near his house, and there left for some time to be seen by the public, who were much interested. After this they were buried in one grave in a nearby field, with suitable headstones which have since been razed to the ground by some thoughtless ploughman, and the exact location lost. After this other skeletons were excavated, but were dumped with the gravel in the deep fill farther north. There is now quite

a plot of level land on the east of, and adjoining the cut mentioned above, which to all appearances was a part of the Indian cemetery.

---

The following pupils attended the old district No. 9 school in 1892 and were all in one class. This list was furnished by Mrs. C. J. Sage of Cherry street; she is a daughter of the late Capt. Willard Rice and was born in Spencer, Jan. 29, 1818:

George Frederick Grout,  
 Frances Marion Temple,  
 Millins Frederick Prouty,  
 Horace William Rice,  
 Wallace Whittemore,  
 Lorenzo Bemis,  
 Moses Bemis,  
 John Draper,  
 Clementine Drake,  
 William Drake.

---

In 1798 the assessors of Spencer made a return of all the houses in town with the ground-floor space occupied by each and the number of windows and square feet of glass in the same. Those belonging to the Bemis family are herewith annexed.

NAME.	Stories to House	Ground Area.	Number Windows	Square ft of Glass.	Assessors Valuation
Bemis, Joseph . . .	1	900	11	45	\$160
Bemis, Nathan . . .	1	1120	12	90	400
Bemis, Nathaniel . .	1	780	7	40	150
Bemis, Joshua . . .	1	1098	9	65	400
Bemis, Silas . . .	1	1140	4	32	200
Bemis, Jonas . . .	2	1140	25	223	600
Bemis, Jesse . . .	1	456			50
Bemis, Amasa . . .	2	800	11	67	320
Bemis, Wm. Jr., . .	2	844	18	110	322
Bemis, David . . .	1	810	10	47	200

## BEAR STORY OF JOSEPH GARFIELD SR.

---

This narrative was related to the author when a child, by his grandmother, Polly (May) Tower.

The last bear killed in Spencer was shot by Joseph Garfield Sr., about the year 1793. He owned the farm occupied later by

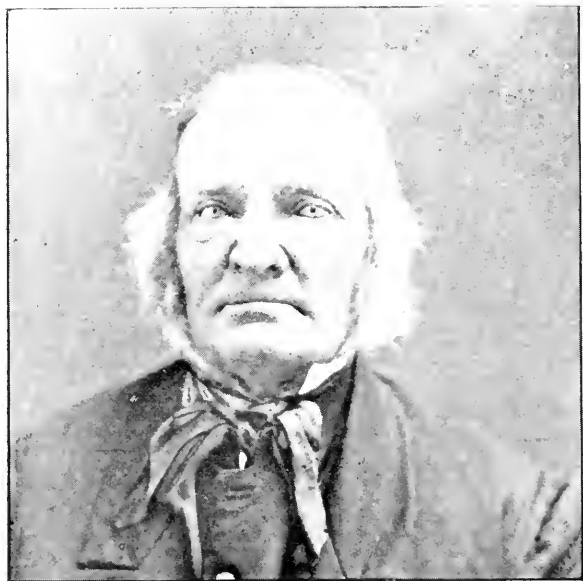


POLLY MAY.

daughter of William May, born in Spencer, December 20, 1784, died in Oakham September 8, 1868. She was a granddaughter of David May, who was one of the active insurgents in Shay's rebellion. She married Luke Tower of Rutland, March 6, 1817 and was the mother of the late Ambrose M. Tower of Spencer.

his son, Joseph Garfield Jr., where Austin Putnam now lives. Mr. Garfield discovered the bear early one morning on a wall north of his dwelling house. The wall ran east and west and divided

his mowing from his woodland. Quickly going to the house he got his rifle and despatched Bruin at the first shot. This was an event of more than local interest, as it had been a long time since a bear had been seen in Spencer. He divided the carcass and it was distributed among his neighbors, a portion finding its way to



JOSEPH GARFIELD JR.,  
who inherited the farm of his father on which the bear was killed.  
Born January 4, 1806. Said to have resembled his father in  
a marked degree.

Mr. May's table. The news spread with great rapidity from house to house. Everyone told everyone else, and in a few hours a stream of people on foot, horseback and in wagons were on their way to the Garfield farm. Parents came, bringing their children, for here was an object lesson not to be lost. A real live bear had been shot and nobody knew how many more there were lurking about in the bushes ready to jump out and eat little boys and girls who had incautiously strayed too far away from home, and all this in those days was thought to be the proper thing to impress on the children's minds, and so deeply were these points stamped on the mind of little Polly May, that even after she had got to be an aged woman the sudden recollection of those impressions caused an involuntary shudder. Of course all the visitors had to go and see the place where the deed was done and congrat-

ulate Mr. Garfield on his bravery and success. The skin in a few days was taken to Mason's tannery in the village and when finished was made into a leather apron for the use of Mr. Gar-



This is guaranteed to be a picture of a section of the identical wall on which the last bear killed in Spencer was shot and which is now standing on the farm of Austin Putnam. The bear however, is not *guaranteed*.

field. He was a cooper in addition to being a farmer and had a small shop 16 x 18 where he made and repaired cider and meat barrels for the farmers in that section of the town.

### Revolutionary Stories

related to Geo. W. Bemis by Lieut. Nathan Craig, a revolutionary soldier, grandfather of Geo. A. Craig Esq., and never before printed. From Bunker Hill there was a narrow neck of land stretching to Charlestown. The British had a gunboat at a convenient distance to command this tract. Lieutenant Craig when crossing this neck with two companions met the Americans retreating and they also started to go back, but being thirsty he stopped with his companions at a well having an old-fashioned sweep. One of the men drew a bucket of water and resting it on the curb commenced drinking, when a cannon ball struck

and completely demolished the curb. The trio then departed on the double quick. At the battle of Bennington the British soldiers that were captured were tied together in pairs with a rope around their arms and this was fastened to a rope that ran



#### THE WILLIAM MAY PLACE

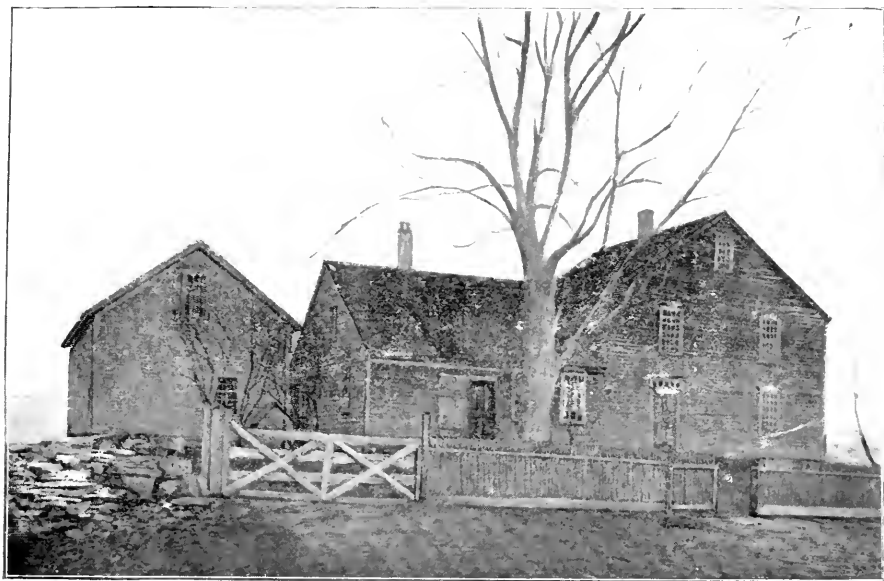
Built on the west end of lot 15, probably about 1742. The farm descended to his son David May, who was with the insurgents in Shay's Rebellion and at Petersham, was one who fired on the government troops wounding Dr. David Young. Dr. Young sued him and recovered large damages, which took the whole value of his farm to satisfy. He removed to Brattleboro, Vt., where he died. This was also the birth-place of Polly May.

through the line between the men. There was also a prominent Tory caught. The American soldiers fastened around his neck the rope that ran between the soldiers and the prisoners were then led through the principal streets.

## SPENCER COMPANY OF MOUNTED MEN.

---

"A Muster Roll of a detachment of men from Capt. John Newhall's company from Spencer District, of Col. John Chandler Jr.'s Regiment that marched on the late alarm for the relief of Fort William Henry under the command of John Newhall as their captain, from Spencer district to Sheffield, being 94 miles." They were gone  $15\frac{1}{2}$  days and each private received 2 lbs., 1 shilling and 4 d. for his services. This was a company of mounted men and the colony allowed 8d. per day for feed for the horses for the



THE ORIGINAL CAPT. JOHN NEWHALL HOUSE.

The ell part of this house is the original Capt. John Newhall house built in 1741 and said to be the oldest in town. In later years it has been known as the Wm. N. Adams place and is the last house in Spencer on the Charlton depot road.

two days they were detained at Sheffield, the balance of the time being taken up on the road. The muster roll was as follows :

Capt. John Newhall,	Private William Morgan,
Ensign William Bemis,	“ James Prouty,
Sergt. Samuel Garfield,	“ Richard Beers Jr.,
Sergt. John White,	“ John Wooster Jr.,
Corporal James Wilson,	“ Daniel Bacon,
Corporal Jonathan Stoddard,	“ Ephraim Brown,
Lieut. Joshua Lamb,	“ Nathan Whitney,
Sergt. Caleb Bridges,	“ Ebenezer Washburn,
Sergt. Joshua Whitney,	“ John Cunningham,
Corporal Josiah Livermore,	“ Oliver Seager,
Corporal Richard Southgate,	“ John Giltford,
Private Oldham Gates,	“ Ebenezer Drury,
“ Jonas Bemis,	“ Isaac Bridges,
“ David Prouty,	“ Nathan Barton,
“ Edmund Bridges,	“ Thomas Wood,
“ Thomas Bridges,	“ Israel Holton,
“ Benj. Woodward,	“ James Draper,
“ Nathaniel Parmenter,	“ Samuel Garfield Jr.,
“ Timothy Capen,	“ James Ormes.
“ Solomon Clarke,	

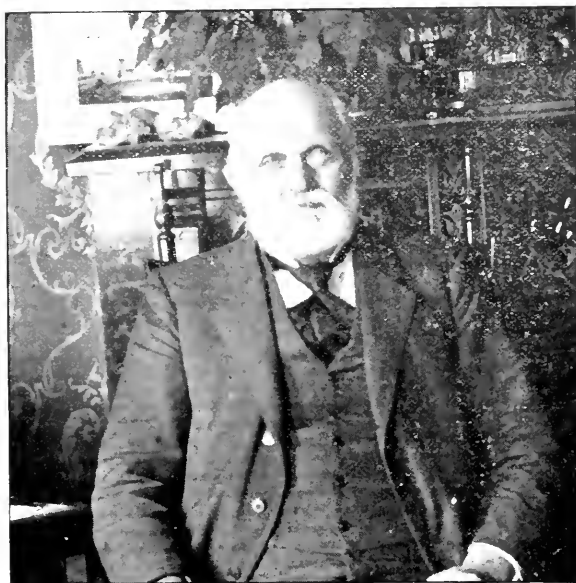
Total cost for the company's service 78 pounds, 19 shillings, 11½ pence. This was in 1759.



## HON. G. W. BEMIS.

---

The subject of this brief biography might truthfully quote, as equally applicable to himself, the opening sentence of the Memoirs of General Grant : " My family is American and has been for generations, in all its branches, direct and collateral," and to the believer in the potency of hereditary influences in the formation of character, he affords an example of the cumulative results of such an ancestry. Thoroughly imbued with the spirit of our institu-



GEORGE WASHINGTON BEMIS,  
of Independence, Iowa. (Photo by G. A. Craig.)

tions, cherishing an unwavering faith in the ultimate universal establishment of the fullest human liberty, and recognizing no social distinction based upon any foundation other than personal merit, he presents a striking type of the ideal American.

The son of Eleazer Bemis, he is a descendant, in the paternal line, of Joseph Bemis, an English yeoman who emigrated to this

country, settling in Watertown, near Boston, in 1640, and through his mother, Susan Hartwell, of William Hartwell, who located in Concord, Mass., in 1636. Patriotism, industry and integrity seem to have been the salient qualities which marked his progenitors, and instances of exceptional longevity point to exemplary habits and well-conducted lives.

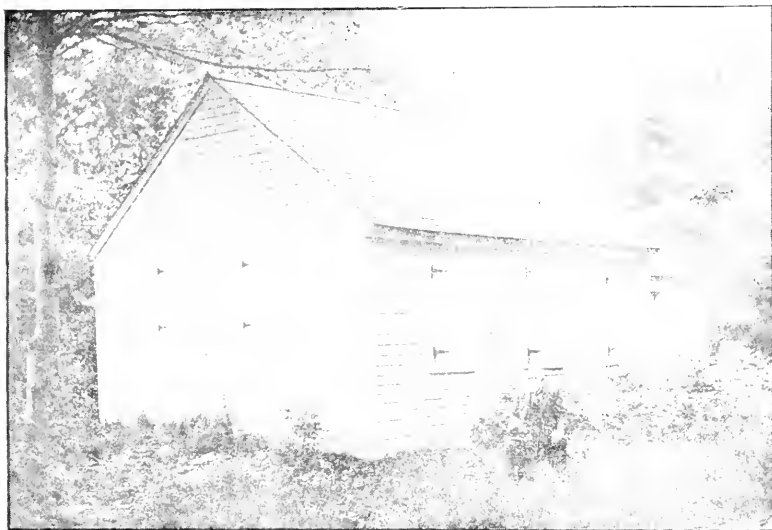
George Washington Bemis was born October 13, 1826, at Spencer, Mass., where he remained until 1837, when his father removed to Alabama, Genesee county, New York. This change of residence was an event of no small moment, and involved a journey of many days, fraught with more adventures and possible dangers than are now incident to an ocean passage or trans-continental tour. The section of New York into which he was thus brought was then a part of the ever-advancing frontier, and he gave a sturdy lad's assistance in the arduous labor of subduing the rugged face of nature to the needs of civilization. This task performed, his summers were spent in working on the farm which he had helped to wrest from the surrounding wilderness, and his winters were devoted to making the best use of such advantages as were offered by the primitive country school. The list would be a long one which included the names of all the men of prominence who owe much of their success to the efforts of the Yankee pedagogue of that period, whom Halleck describes as

\* \* \* \* \*  
 "teaching  
 The A B C from Webster's spelling book,  
 Gallant and godly, making love and preaching,  
 And gaining by what they call 'hook and crook,'  
 And what the moralists call over-reaching,  
 A decent living."

A course at the Cary Collegiate Seminary at Oakfield supplemented this instruction, and that he profited by every educational opportunity is shown by his early election to the office of superintendent of the township schools. His interest in political matters dates from the presidential campaign of 1840, and in 1848 he disgusted his father—an ardent Whig—by casting one of the eleven anti-slavery ballots "which leavened the lump" of four hundred polled in that district for the opposing candidate. He remained an enthusiastic and uncompromising Abolitionist throughout the struggle which terminated in emancipation. He has always, too, been a zealous advocate of woman suffrage. He taught school for two years in Wisconsin and in April, 1854, came west to visit an acquaintance. So enamoured did he become of the broad and fertile prairies of Iowa during his stay that he determined to adopt Independence as a place of residence, and went into the land business. Shortly afterward he became engaged to Miss Narcissa T. Roszell and, in the February of 1855, he went to New York, whither the young lady had preceded him, and brought her back his wife. This proved an exceptionally happy marriage—a union

of congenial tastes and hearty co-operation of progressive aims. It was blessed by three children: May, who did not long survive early womanhood, and William S. and Arthur R., young men who have now established homes of their own.

Mr. Bemis was elected a member of the Eighth General Assembly in 1859, and served in the lower house during the regular

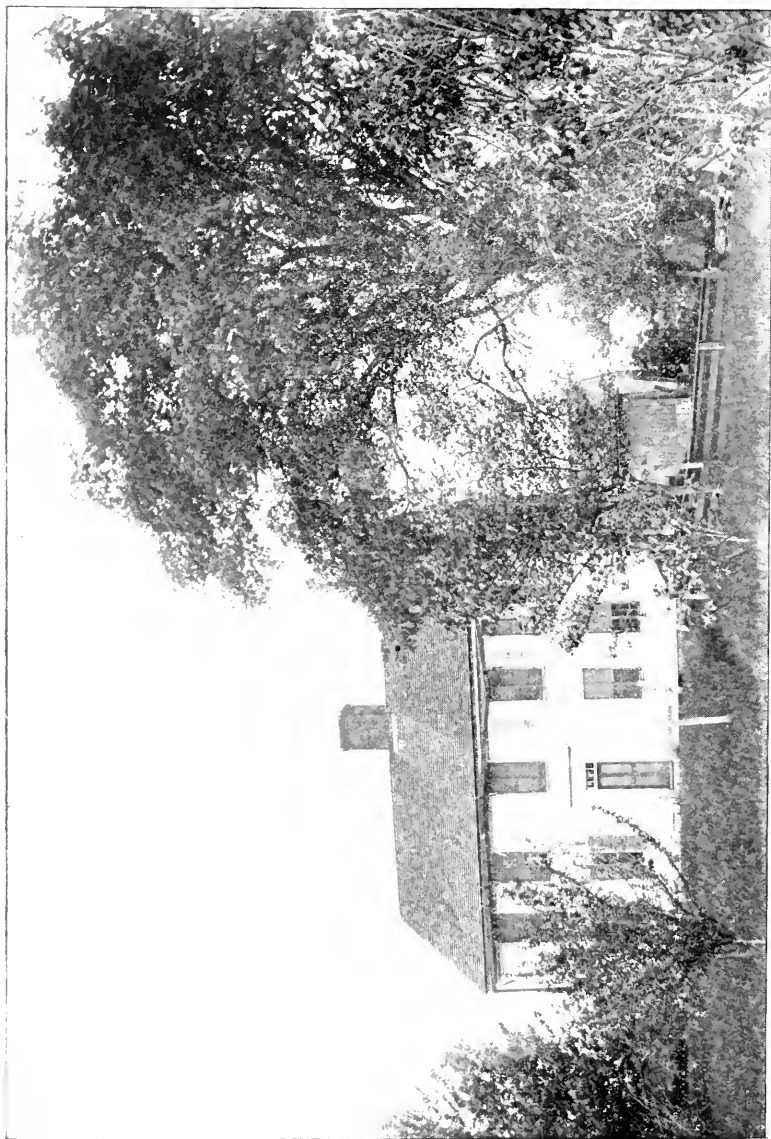


#### GEORGE WASHINGTON BEMIS.

Of Independence, Iowa, visiting the schoolhouse of his youth at District No. 2, Spencer, Mass., in 1888. Photographed by George A. Cragg, Esq. His father, Eleazer, was a grandson of Capt. Edmund Bemis, and lived on the Daniel Chickering place prior to his removal West in 1847.

"For every heart there is some cherished spot,  
Some scenes which time and distance never blot;  
We love the mansions where our kindred dwelt,  
We love the altars where our fathers knelt,  
We love the classic hall, the tranquil shade,  
Where in the studious hours of youth we strayed;  
And when we mingle in the busy strife  
Of sterner cares, that mark maturer life,  
Then forms are loved, revered, remembered still,  
That curbed our passions, and controlled our will,  
And opened to the mind's inquiring eye,  
Fountains of thought that time can never dry."

session of 1860. It may be of some interest to mention, as an illustration of the changes wrought in a few decades, that four days and three nights were consumed in going from Independ-



THE JOSEPH BEMIS HOUSE.

*(Photo by G. A. Craig.)*

ence to Des Moines, and that the capital had neither a railroad nor a telegraph line at that time. The session lasted nearly three months, and the legislators had to deal with business of great importance, including a revision of the Code, and an attempt to mitigate the "hard times" then existing by remodeling the revenue laws. Mr. Bemis introduced an important bill in relation to the duties of county surveyor and was largely instrumental in substituting the present supervisor system for the then existing county judge rule. The extra or "war session" which followed in June, 1861, was one that demanded action in affairs of much moment, and in all the deliberations he took a prominent part, his sagacious influence being very apparent. As one of a special committee of five, he was sent to investigate the construction of the insane asylum at Mt. Pleasant, out of which some ugly scandal had arisen, and he performed other and important duties.

Upon the expiration of his term, he was made a postal clerk on the Illinois Central Railroad between Dubuque and Sioux City, a position which he held for seven years. In the fall of 1869 he

---

### The Joseph Bemis House,

Cut of which is shown on opposite page, was situated on lot 80, where Captain Edmund, father of Joseph, settled. Joseph Bemis was born in Spencer November 20, 1752, and died January 17, 1823. His wife Jemima (Craig) Bemis, was born in Leicester, September 19, 1759, died in Spencer July 21, 1848. She was a sister of Nathan Craig of Bunker Hill fame. This house was built probably about 1820, and it was here that George W. Bemis, son of Eleazer Bemis, was born. Sylvanus Bemis son of Joseph, was an expert carpenter, and made by hand all the window frames, sash and doors for this house.

---

was appointed by Governor Merrill, one of the Commissioners of the Hospital for the Insane at Independence, to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Albert Clarke, and he acted as Secretary and Treasurer of the Board until his resignation in December, 1871. He was reappointed by Governor Carpenter in April, 1872, and served in the same capacity until July, 1892, during which time he received and disbursed more than a million dollars. He was elected from Buchanan county to the State Senate in 1871, and was justly regarded as one of the most efficient members of that body, giving to its records little in the way of oratory, but much service in a conscientious application of practical business judgment to the questions which presented themselves for consideration. He served as chairman of the committee on the State University and was one of the committee on appropriations. He also secured for the hospital at Independence, without a dissenting voice in the Senate, an appropriation of \$200,000, the largest ever granted. He was chosen Treasurer of State in 1876 and re-

elected in 1878, conducting the affairs of that extremely responsible office in such a manner as to win expressions of general approval.

He was a member of the first board of supervisors of Buchanan county and, apropos of his candidacy for that office, he once told an amusing and characteristic anecdote. On the day of the election he returned from an eastern trip to learn, with surprise, of his nomination. The struggle was an intensely hot one, party feeling ran high and the result of the battle was in great doubt. He started for the polls with the modest intention, as in previous instances, of voting for his opponent, but it occurred to him on the way that he was no more justified in "scratching" than any other voter, and he deposited a straight ticket in the box. "I received a majority of exactly one," he concluded, "and so became the choice of the people."

Mr. Bemis is of rather more than medium stature and somewhat full habit. His physiognomy and the general contour of his head recall portraits of Charles Darwin, and in many respects he is not unlike that eminent iconoclast. A long public career has left him with an unblemished reputation. He has held great pecuniary trusts with an integrity that has never known the shadow of suspicion, and in every situation he has been the champion of temperance and sound morality. It is fitting that, with good health, a keen relish for all intellectual and wholesome recreation, surrounded in his pleasant home by the friends and neighbors of a half a century, he should be able to say with Adam, in "As You Like It"—

"Therefore my age is as a lusty winter,  
Frosty, but kindly."

This sketch was written by Stephen Tabor.

# GENEALOGY OF JOSEPH BEMIS

OF SPENCER, MASS., AND OF HIS DESCENDANTS.

JOSEPH BEMIS was the son of Capt. Edmund Bemis and grandson of Samuel Bemis Sr., both of Spencer.

JOSEPH BEMIS 7, Edmund 6, Samuel 5, John 4, Joseph 3, Joseph 2, John 1; b. at Spencer, Nov. 20, 1752; d. Jan. 17, 1823; m. Jemima Craig b. at Leicester, Sept. 10, 1750; d. July 21, 1841.

## CHILDREN.

- |              |                                      |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 Daniel,    | b. June 10, 1782, d. Sept. 16, 1803. |
| 2 Mary,      | b. Feb. 22, 1784, d. April 10, 1877. |
| 3 William,   | b. Aug. 27, 1785, d. July 12, 1873.  |
| 4 Patty,     | b. Jan. 27, 1789.                    |
| 5 Susan,     | b. June 23, 1791, d. June 5, 1850.   |
| 6 Eleazer,   | b. Nov. 17, 1793, d. Aug. 15, 1873.  |
| 7 Sylvanus,  | b. June 18, 1796, d. May 29, 1884.   |
| 8 Sally,     | b. Aug. 7, 1798, d. Nov. 1850.       |
| 9 John,      | b. Dec. 13, 1801, d. Aug. 28, 1883.  |
| 10 Franklin, | b. Feb. 1, 1803, d. July 14, 1863.   |

DANIEL BEMIS 8, Joseph 7, Edmund 6, Samuel 5, John 4, Joseph 3, Joseph 2; John 1; b. June 16, 1782, in Spencer, Mass.; d. Sept. 16, 1863, in Plymouth, Wis.; m. Charlotte Wheelock, Nov. 1811; b. Nov. 1, 1790, in Charlton, Mass.; d. May 31, 1857, in Plymouth, Wis. Removed from Spencer, Mass., between Sept., 1813, and Oct., 1816; removed to Byron, Genessee Co., N. Y., between 1827 and 1833; removed to Alabama, Genessee Co., N. Y., between 1827 and 1837; removed to Plymouth, Wis. in 1844.

## CHILDREN.

- |                       |                                     |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 William,            | b. Apr. 24, 1812, d. June 2, 1892.  |
| 2 Edmund,             | b. Sept. 25, 1813, d. June 7, 1884. |
| 3 Albert,             | b. Oct. 27, 1816, d. Feb. 14, 1890. |
| 4 Jervis Orlando,     | b. Aug. 11, 1818, d. Oct. 3, 1901.  |
| 5 George Washington,  | b. July 30, 1821.                   |
| 6 Kiron Wheelock,     | b. June 11, 1824.                   |
| 7 Charlotte Wheelock, | b. Feb. 11, 1827.                   |
| 8 Jerome Bonaparte,   | b. Feb. 17, 1833.                   |

WILLIAM BEMIS 9, Daniel 8, Joseph 7, Edmund 6, Samuel 5, John 4, Joseph 3, Joseph 2, John 1; b. Apr. 24, 1812, in Spencer, Mass.; d. June 2, 1892, in Plymouth, Wis.; m. Polly Jones.

#### CHILDREN.

- 1 Helen.
- 2 Cora.
- 3 Duessa.
- 4 Amber.

EDMUND BEMIS 9, Daniel 8, Joseph 7, Edmund 6, Samuel 5, John 4, Joseph 3, Joseph 2, John 1; b. Sept. 25, 1813, in Spencer, Mass.; d. June 7, 1884, in Monmouth, Col.; m. Louisa Hall, in Elba, N.Y.; Feb. 12, 1837; b. in N. Y., Feb. 18, 1817.

#### CHILDREN.

- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| 1 Maria Louisa,        | b. May 10, 1841, in Alabama, N. Y.<br>d. at Silverton, Col., Aug. 16, 1875.  |
| 2 Delephene Charlotte, | b. Feb. 17, 1844, in Alabama, N. Y.<br>d. Oct. 17, 1862, at Evansville, Wis. |
| 3 Frank,               | b. Oct. 18, 1845, d. Mar. 5, 1847.   |
| 4 Horace Greeley,      | b. in Alabama, Genessee Co., N. Y.   |
| 5 Charles Edmund       | b. July 29, 1850, in Wisconsin.  |
| 6 Luella               | b. Dec. 31, 1854, d. Oct. 3, 1862,<br>in Milwaukee, Wis.                     |

MARIA LOUISA, m. Samuel L. Wallihan, at Evansville, Wis., Nov. 17, 1857.

#### CHILDREN.

- |                   |                                   |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 Maud,           | b. July 4, 1860, d. Feb. 7, 1864. |
| 2 Edmund Percy,   | b. May 5, 1865.                   |
| 3 Ernest Collier, | b. Sept. 13, 1867.                |
| 4 Lucy Maria,     | b. Aug. 20, 1870.                 |
| 5 Helen Bemis,    | b. May 5, 1873.                   |

HORACE GREELEY, m. Addie Carnahan, at Carson City, Col., Oct. 6, 1876.

#### CHILDREN.

- |                 |                                      |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 Kate May      | b. Apr. 8, 1878, at Monument, Col.   |
| 2 Clyde Horace, | b. Sept. 14, 1886, at Longmont, Col. |

CHARLES EDMUND, m. Addie Souther, Sept. 14, 1889, at Los Angeles, California.

#### CHILDREN.

- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| 1 Charles Worthy  | b. June 26, 1890, d. July 26, 1890<br>at Corina, Cal. |
| 2 Waldo Edmund,   | b. July 26, 1891, at Corina, Cal.                     |
| 3 Harold Winston, | b. Dec. 10, 1893, " "                                 |
| 4 Muriel Winnona, | b. Feb. 15, 1895, " "                                 |



ALBERT BEMIS 9, Daniel 8, Joseph 7, Edmund 6, Samuel 5, John 4, Joseph 3, Joseph 2, John 1; b. Oct. 16, 1816, at Hamilton, Madison Co., N. Y.; d. Feb. 14, 1890, at Evansville, Wis.; m. March 23, 1842, to Martha Ann Fowle, b. Dec. 25, 1820, in Monroe Co., N. Y.

CHILDREN.

- |   |            |                                     |
|---|------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | Jacob F.,  | b. June 27, 1844, in Rock Co. Wis.  |
| 2 | Louise J., | b. Jan. 20, 1847.                   |
| 3 | Edgar, )   | b. Feb. 28, 1850. d. Mch. 28, 1850. |
| 4 | Edwin, )   | d. Apr. 4, 1850.                    |
| 5 | Arthur L., | b. Feb. 28, 1851.                   |

JACOB F., m. Maria Cogwell, May 8, 1873; she d. Jan. 21, 1880.

CHILDREN.

- |   |           |   |
|---|-----------|---|
| 1 | Annie B., | b. Feb. 27, 1874, m. Elmer E. Scoville. |
| 2 | Marie,    | b. Nov. 11, 1878.                       |

JACOB F., m. 2d time, Caroline Roberts, Nov. 28, 1889.

ANNIE B., m. Elmer E. Scoville.

CHILDREN.

- |   |                  |                   |
|---|------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | Earl B.,         | b. July 1, 1891.  |
| 2 | Maurice Lee,     | b. July 4, 1899.  |
| 3 | Elmer Ellsworth, | b. Feb. 19, 1900. |

LOUISE J., m. Feb. 21, 1867, Louis J. Haines; Haines d. Mch. 31, 1888.

CHILDREN.

- |   |             |                   |
|---|-------------|-------------------|
| 1 | Albert L.,  | b. Mch. 31, 1871. |
| 2 | Lottie M.,  | b. Feb. 28, 1875. |
| 3 | Martha L.,  | b. Dec. 4, 1883.  |
| 4 | William L., | b. Apr. 3, 1886.  |

ARTHUR L., m. Flora R. Withington, Nov. 28, 1874. She was b. June 5, 1851.

CHILDREN.

- |   |            |                   |
|---|------------|-------------------|
| 1 | Albert W., | b. Apr. 7, 1878.  |
| 2 | Lillian,   | b. Nov. 22, 1879. |

JERVIS ORLANDO BEMIS 9, Daniel 8, Joseph 7, Edmund 6, Samuel 5, John 4, Joseph 3, Joseph 2, John 1; b. Aug. 11, 1818, at Hamilton, Madison Co., N. Y.; m. Dec. 19, 1841, to Eunice Marie Bump, b. May 1, 1823 in Byron, Genessee Co., N. Y.

## CHILDREN.

- 1 Daniel Duane, b. July 3, 1843.
- 2 Elizabeth Ann, b. Sept. 4, 1845. d. Wis.
- 3 George Atward, b. June 7, 1847. d. Wis.
- 4 Frank Angelo, b. June 1, 1849.
- 5 Kiron Jervis, b. Dec. 24, 1852.
- 6 Fred Herbert, b. Jan. 8, 1856.
- 7 John Bently, b. Aug. 24, 1858.
- 8 Charlotte Amanda, b. July 22, 1861.

DANIEL DUANE BEMIS, son of Jervis, b. July 3, 1843; m. Annett W. Henderson, Jan. 8, 1868. She was b. Jan. 23, 1844 at Beloit, Wis.

## CHILDREN.

- 1 Harry Henderson, b. Dec. 12, 1868.
- 2 Julia Lee, b. Sept. 9, 1870.
- 3 Kate Marie, b. June 9, 1872.
- 4 Anna Lee, b. Nov. 13, 1873.
- 5 Nettie Eunice, b. Dec. 21, 1875.
- 6 Elizabeth Bell, b. Dec. 8, 1877.
- 7 Charles Herbert, b. June 9, 1881.

HARRY H. BEMIS, b. Dec. 12, 1868; m. June 10, 1897 to Ella A. Perry; b. Aug. 18, 1866.

## CHILDREN.

- 1 Julia Lee, b. Sept. 9, 1870; m. Nov. 27, 1892 to Thomas E. Williams, b. Aug. —, 1869.
- 2 Kate Marie, b. June 9, 1872; m. June 20, 1893 to John C. Spangler of Ohio; b. July 16, 1870.

Daniel Duane Bemis served through the Civil War in a Wisconsin regiment.

ELIZABETH ANN, daughter of Jervis O. Bemis, b. Sept. 4, 1845; m. James M. Pool (b. May 17, 1845) March 8, 1867.

## CHILDREN.

- 1 Marvin Bemis Pool, b. Aug. 21, 1881; m. Grace Young, Sept. 13, 1893.

## CHILDREN.

- 1 Dorothy Grace Pool, b. Aug. 19, 1895.

GEORGE ATWARD BEMIS, son of Jervis O. Bemis, b. June 7, 1847; m. May 10, 1873 to Caroline Mary Barkly; b. Jan. 28, 1853; d. Oct. 1, 1883.

CHILDREN.

- 1 Eunice Delphene, b. Jan. 3, 1874; m. Oct. 4, 1893,  
Burt E. McElhiney.
- 2 Jervis Kiron, b. Nov. 3, 1876.
- 3 Bently Ambrose, b. Sept. 28, 1878.
- 4 George Ray, b. May 25, 1882.

EUNICE DELPHENE McELHINEY.

CHILDREN.

- 1 William Bemis, b. Dec. 3, 1875.
- 2 Hazel Marie, b. June 21, 1897.

FRANK ANGELO BEMIS, son of Jervis O. Bemis; b. June 4, 1840; m. Lucy Cory; b. April 6, 1852.

CHILDREN.

- 1 Ivah Bat-sev, b. June 23, 1872.
- 2 Fanny Dale, b. Nov. 18, 1873.
- 3 Harvy Bently, b. April 14, 1879.
- 4 Kiron Cory, b. Jan. 13, 1879.
- 5 Eunice Lucy, b. April 10, 1881; d. Dec. 8, 1881.
- 6 Lotty Cory, b. June 14, 1883.

IVAH BETSEY BEMIS, m. Aug. 13, 1893 to Albert J. Christler; b. July 6, 1873.

CHILDREN.

- 1 Lucy Elizabeth, b. June 23, 1894.
- 2 Bently John, b. Aug. 3, 1896.

KIRON JERVIS BEMIS, son of Jervis O. Bemis; b. Dec. 24, 1852; m. June 2, 1887, to Wilhelmina Onderdonk Gesner, b. in Ohio, May 30, 1864.

CHILDREN.

- 1 Jean Marguerite, b. Aug. 16, 1888.
- 2 Frances Gesner, b. Aug. 13, 1889.
- 3 Jeanette Eunice, b. May 23, 1891.
- 4 Charlotte Elinor, b. July 22, 1894.
- 5 Berenice Willa, b. Mch. 18, 1897.

FRED HERBERT BEMIS, son of Jervis O. Bemis; b. Jan. 8, 1856; m. Mch. 28, 1883, Cora Bell Dean, b. Nov. 10, 1859, d.

CHILDREN.

- 1 Herbert Dean, b. Dec. 17, 1884.
- 3 Jervis Orlando, b. July 7, 1886, d. May 11, 1888.
- 3 Fred Parker, b. Aug. 9, 1891.

JOHN BENTLY BEMIS, son of Jervis O. Bemis; b. Aug. 24, 1858. m. May 15, 1884, to Nannie Cooper Hamilton, b. July 25, 1862.

## CHILDREN.

- 1 Fay Hamilton Bemis, b. Sept. 14, 1885.
- 2 Harold Bemis, b. Sept. 25, 1887, d. Feb. 22, 1889.
- 3 Bently John, b. Sept. 14, 1890.
- 4 Marjorie Cambridge, b. Mar. 7, 1893.

CHARLOTTE AMANDA, daughter of Jervis O. Bemis; b. July 22, 1861; m. Nov. 27, 1884, to Philip Parker, b. Jan. 30, 1859.

## CHILDREN.

- 1 Philip Walter, b. Dec. 22, 1885.
- 2 Fred Bemis, b. Jan. 14, 1890.
- 3 Eunice Deborah, b. Mar. 11, 1892.
- 4 Richard M., b. Jan. 4, 1894, d. July 25, 1894.

GEORGE WASHINGTON BEMIS 9, Daniel 8, Joseph 7, Edmund 6, Samuel 5, John 4, Joseph 3, Joseph 2, John 1; b. July 30, 1821, in Madison Co., N. Y.; m. Sophia J. Bump, b. Aug. 17, 1825.

## CHILDREN.

- 1 Florence, Ione, b. Mch. 27, 1849; m. Medor Jerome DeLent, b. Mch. 16, 1851, d. Apr. 26, 1899; m. Dec. 22, 1873.

## CHILDREN.

- 1 Flora May, b. Mch. 6, 1875.
- 2 Louis William, b. Apr. 2, 1886, d. Mch. 20, 1889.
- 2 Flora R. Bemis, b. Oct. 1858, m. Wm. S. Bemis, March 27, 1881.

## CHILDREN.

- 1 George Arthur, b. Apr. 27, 1884.
- 2 William Seward, b. Jan. 29, 1891.
- 3 Louis Medor, b. Dec. 23, 1893.

KIRON WHEELOCK BEMIS 9, Daniel 8, Joseph 7, Edmund 6, Samuel 5, John 4, Joseph 3, Joseph 2, John 1; b. June 11, 1824, in Madison Co., N. Y.; m. Rachael Wheeler.

## CHILDREN.

- 1 Orrin Wheeler Bemis.
- 2 Edgar Marsh Bemis.

CHARLOTTE WHEELLOCK BEMIS 9, Daniel 8, Joseph 7, Edmund 6, Samuel 5, John 4, Joseph 3, Joseph 2, John 1; b. Feb. 11, 1827, in Madison Co., N. Y.; m. Abraham Asa Boyce, Oct. 7, 1846; he was b. June 12, 1821; d. Feb. 14, 1894.

JEROME BONAPARTE BEMIS 9, Daniel 8, Joseph 7, Edmund 6, Samuel 5, John 4, Joseph 3, Joseph 2, John 1; b. Feb. 17, 1833, in Byron, Genessee Co., N. Y.; m. Mary E. Clifford, Aug. 31, 1862; b. May 8, 1840, in Maine.

CHILDREN.

- |   |           |  |
|---|-----------|--|
| 1 | May C.,   | b. July 27, 1863; m. Lewis Fellows, Sept. 7, 1886. |
| 2 | Ollie M., | b. Apr. 1, 1865; m. Fred S. Fellows, Oct. 7, 1884. |
| 3 | Asa B.,   | b. Feb. 22, 1869; m. Blanch Vevoim, July 31, 1895. |

CHILDREN.

- |   |            |  |
|---|------------|--|
| 1 | Marion L., | b. June 14, 1896.                                      |
| 4 | Kittie C.  | b. Jan. 3, 1871; m. Robin A. Manville, Sept. 10, 1892. |
| 5 | Grace M.   | b. Oct. 1, 1878; m. Charles Off, Oct. 9, 1897.         |

CHILDREN.

- |   |             |                   |
|---|-------------|-------------------|
| 1 | Lillian M., | b. Apr. 15, 1899. |
|---|-------------|-------------------|

KIRON W. BEMIS moved from Alabama, Genessee Co., N. Y., in 1844 to Plymouth Rock Co., Wisconsin. He was chairman of the board of supervisors of Plymouth for many years; also member of the County board of supervisors of Rock County; also member of the legislature of Wisconsin in 1858; afterwards recorder of deeds of Rock County. He held a position in the provost marshal's office by appointment of the government.

SUSAN BEMIS 8, Joseph 7, Edmund 6, Samuel 5, John 4, Joseph 3, Joseph 2, John 1; b. June 23, 1791, at Spencer, Mass.; d. June 5, 1856; m. Joel Wilson; b. July 31, 1787; d. Aug. 15, 1859.

CHILDREN.

- |   |            |                                     |
|---|------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | Chester,   | b. Oct. 4, 1811. d. Jan. 22, 1890.  |
| 2 | Wilbur,    | b. July 2, 1813. d. Dec. 10, 1871.  |
| 3 | Winthrop,  | b. Aug. 25, 1816. d. Jan. 28, 1887. |
| 4 | Susan,     | b. ——— d. Apr. —, 1856.             |
| 5 | Joel Jun., | b. May 21, 1820. d. Nov. 9, 1849.   |
| 6 | Jane,      | b. Apr. 7, 1826. d. Feb. 25, 1887.  |
| 7 | Mary Ann,  | b. May 27, 1828. d. June —, 1872.   |

CHESTER WILSON 9, Susan 8, Joseph 7, Edmund 6, Samuel 5, John 4, Joseph 3, Joseph 2, John 1; b. Oct. 4, 1811; d. at Jamaica, Vt., Jan. 22, 1890.

WILBUR WILSON 9, Susan 8, Joseph 7, Edmund 6, Samuel 5, John 4, Joseph 3, Joseph 2, John 1; b. July 2, 1813; m. Sarah Demond of Rutland, Mass.

CHILDREN.

1. Sarah.
2. Chauncey P.
3. Walter J.

WINTHROP WILSON 9, Susan 8, Joseph 7, Edmund 6, Samuel 5, John 4, Joseph 3, Joseph 2, John 1; b. Aug. 25, 1816; m. Cornelia Lamb Wheelock of Churlton, Mass., Sept. 13, 1841; d. May 3, 1878.

CHILDREN.

- |                |                                      |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Maria D.,   | b. June 14, 1840; d. Sept. 28, 1890. |
| 2. Anselm D.,  | b. Dec. 24, 1840.                    |
| 3. Edith M.,   | b. Aug. 15, 1852.                    |
| 4. William L., | b. May 10, 1855.                     |
| 5. Alfred M.,  | b. Sept. 13, 1858.                   |

LITTLEMAN, of Holden, P. Mass., Dec. 31, 1875; b. July 25.

CHILDREN.

- |                    |                   |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. George W. Jr.,  | b. Nov. 12, 1883. |
| 2. William Holden, | b. Oct. 12, 1885. |

SUSAN WILSON 9, Susan 8, Joseph 7, Edmund 6, Samuel 5, John 4, Joseph 3, Joseph 2, John 1; Susan 7; m. Thomas 10; b. Nov. 1, 1877.

CHILDREN.

1. Thomas.
- James.

JOEL WILSON JR. 9, Susan 8, Joseph 7, Edmund 6, Samuel 5, John 4, Joseph 3, Joseph 2, John 1; Joel Jr. b. May 21, 1820; m.

CHILDREN.

- |            |                                    |
|------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. George; | m. Emma Tolman of Worcester, Mass. |
|------------|------------------------------------|

CHILDREN.

1. George Jr.

JANE WILSON 9, Susan 8, Joseph 7, Edmund 6, Samuel 5, John 4, Joseph 3, Joseph 2, John 1; Jane b. April 7, 1826; m. Dea. James I. Goulding, of Springfield, Mass., June 5, 1873.

MARY ANN WILSON a, Susan 8, Joseph 7, Edmund 6, Samuel 5, John 4, Joseph 3, Joseph 2, John 1; Mary A. b. May 27, 1828; m. Sewell Wheeler

CHILDREN.

- 1 Frank.
- 2 Mary.
- 3 Susan.
- 4 Ella.
- 5 Anna.

ELIAZER BEMIS 8, Joseph 7, Edmund 6, Samuel 5, John 4, Joseph 3, Joseph 2, John 1; b. Nov. 17, 1793, Spencer, Mass.; d. Aug. 11, 1873; m. Susan Hartwell, Sept. 2, 1822; b. June 7, 1802; d. Aug. 16, 1834; m. 2nd time, Julia Huntington, Oct. 12, 1837; b. 1818; d. Mch. 26, 1892.

CHILDREN.

by first wife

- 1 Jane, b. July 29, 1824; d. Jan. 12, 1833.
- 2 George W., b. Oct. 13, 1826, Spencer, Mass.
- 3 Susan Hartwell, b. Apr. 11, 1832; d. June 20, 1869.

GEORGE W. BEMIS a, Eleazer 8, Joseph 7, Edmund 6, Samuel 5, John 4; Joseph 3; Joseph 2, John 1; b. Oct. 13, 1826, Spencer, Mass.; m. Apr. 11, 1855, Narcissa T. Roszelle, Alabama, Genessee Co., N. Y.; d. Aug. 9, 1899.

CHILDREN.

- 1 May B b. June 27, 1857; m. Oct. 16, 1879, in Des Moines, Iowa, to William D. Lee; d. June 8, 1883.
- 2 William Seward, b. Sept. 27, 1859, in Independence, Iowa; m. Apr., 17, 1881, to Flora R. Bemis, in Janesville, Wis.

CHILDREN.

- 1 George A., b. Apr. 27, 1884.
- 2 William S. Jr., b. Jan. 29, 1891.
- 4 Louis Medor, b. Dec. 23, 1893.
- 3 Arthur Roszelle, b. Dec. 6, 1862; m. May 31, 1894, to Birdie May Ahern; b. Oct. 15, 1875.

CHILDREN.

- 1 Narcissa May, b. May 27, 1895; d. Oct. 2, 1895.
- 2 Arthur Roszelle Jr., b. Sept. 28, 1897.

ELEAZER BEMIS moved from Spencer, Mass., to Alabama, Genessee Co., N. Y., in Oct., 1837, where he purchased a farm on which he lived until the time of his death, Aug. 15, 1873.

SUSAN HARTWELL, BEMIS 9, Eleazer 8, Joseph 7, Edmund 6, Samuel 5, John 4, Joseph 3, Joseph 2, John 1; b. April 11, 1832; m. April 8, 1862 to Elijah Town; b. July 24, 1827.

CHILDREN.

- 1 Charlotte Z., b. July 31, 1865; m. July 31, 1900 to Charles W. Ferris; b. April 2, 1865.

CHILDREN.

- 1 Paul Eugene, b. May 9, 1901.
- 2 Mary Hartwell, b. Aug. 20, 1869; d. July 17, 1885.
- 3 Susie H., b. June 24, 1872.

WILLIAM BEMIS 8, Joseph 7, Edmund 6, Samuel 5, John 4, Joseph 3, Joseph 2, John 1; b. Aug. 27, 1786; d. July 12, 1873; m. Aug. 27, 1820, Samantha Hollenbeck; b. in 1804; d. Nov. 16, 1852.

CHILDREN.

- 1 Joseph Craig, b. Oct. 22, 1821; d. Jan. 27, 1894.
- 2 Mary Lucy, b. Feb. 6, 1826; d. Aug. 17, 1896.
- 3 Daniel Webster b. Oct. 19, 1828.
- 4 Sarah L., b. June 11, 1831.

JOSEPH CRAIG BEMIS 9, William 8, Joseph 7, Edmund 6, Samuel 5, John 4, Joseph 3, Joseph 2, John 1; b. Oct. 22, 1821; d. June 27, 1894; m. Lucia Annie Wood of Woodstock, Vt., Dec. 12, 1848. She was b. Dec. 30, 1823; d. Jan. 29, 1882.

CHILDREN.

- 1 William E., b. Oct. 22, 1849; m. July 25, 1883, Mary Watts; b. July 4, 1857.

CHILDREN.

- 1 Florence E., b. June 4, 1884.
- 2 Alice C., b. July 14, 1853, m. Dec. 14, 1886 to George A. Sturtevant; b. March 5, 1860.

CHILDREN.

- 1 Ray Atherton, b. Feb. 9, 1889.
- 2 A. Edith, b. Sept. 27, 1862; m. Sept. 20, 1888 to Harry A. Sturtevant; b. July 4, 1864.



CHILDREN.

- 1 Lucia E. b. March 10, 1890.
- 2 Wallis H., b. April 22, 1891.
- 3 George C., b. October 3, 1892.
- 4 Dorothy Bemis, b. Dec'r 30, 1896.

JOSEPH CRAIG BEMIS served through the Civil War in a Massachusetts regiment.

MARY LUCY BEMIS 9, William 8, Joseph 7, Edmund 6, Samuel 5, John 4, Joseph 3, Joseph 2, John 1; b. Feb. 6, 1826; d. Aug. 17, 1896; m. July 6, 1852, Leander Bartlett; b. in 1822; d. Nov. 2, 1856.

CHILDREN.

- 1 William Leander, b. March 28, 1853; m. Jan. 2, 1879 to Mary Frances Cushing; b. July 26, 1856.

CHILDREN.

- 1 William Cushing, b. March 28, 1886; d. April 8, 1886.

DANIEL WEBSTER BEMIS 9, William 8, Joseph 7, Edmund 6, Samuel 5, John 4, Joseph 3, Joseph 2, John 1; b. Oct. 19, 1828; m. Aug. 5, 1853 in Fitchburg, Mass. to Mary Hughs; b. Oct. 12, 1833.

CHILDREN.

- 1 Maud, b. Jan. 6, 1855 in Illinois; d. Aug. 16, 1855.
- 2 Walter Herbert, b. Aug. 3, 1857, Fitchburg, Mass.; d. Feb. 18, 1861.
- 3 Mary Elsa, b. Sept. 18, 1860, Fitchburg, Mass.
- 4 Richard Percival, b. Sept. 11, 1862; m. June 20, 1894, Anna Stuart Welsh.
- 5 Ralph Emery, b. April 26, 1872.

SARAH L. BEMIS 9, William 8, Joseph 7, Edmund 6, Samuel 5, John 4, Joseph 3, Joseph 2, John 1; b. June 11, 1831.

DANIEL W. BEMIS was a civil engineer, and was employed in the location and construction of railroads in different states, also in Mexico. About 1875 he surveyed for John Gilman and others a railroad projected to go through the Wire Villages in Spencer. He served in a Massachusetts regiment in the Civil War.

## CHILDREN OF AMASA BEMIS JR.



PERSIS NEWELL BEMIS,  
late wife of Dexter Ballard.  
Born August 25, 1818. Died June 11, 1871.

CHANDLER,  
1811-1871.

JOSHUA EMERSON,  
1811-1871.

EDWIN AMASA,  
1811-1871.

LORTENZO,  
1811-1871.

## BEMIS MEMORIAL PARK.

---

The agitation of a memorial to Samuel Bemis brought about more extended results than the Board of Trade committee anticipated.

The original plan was to have the monument near the roadside where passing travelers could readily stop and read the inscription. Mr. Thomas A. Prouty, who then owned the Bemis homestead grounds, kindly donated land for this purpose and a foundation was put in. Some of the family, however, were not wholly satisfied with the location. Mr. Walter C. Bemis, taking an active interest in the matter, and being very desirous that the monument should be placed near the site where Samuel Bemis built his first house, purchased the original house lot of ten acres with the intent of making it available for that purpose.

Through the generosity of Mrs. Phoebe Anna Bemis, the committee were given the privilege of appropriating the whole or so much as they thought desirable for the purpose—the gift to be in memory of her husband, Chandler Bemis and his brothers, Joshua Emerson Bemis, Edwin Amasa Bemis, Lorenzo Bemis and sister, Persis Newell Bemis, late wife of Dexter Bullard, and children of Amasa Bemis Jr.

At a meeting of members of the committee and members of the Bemis family, about three acres of this tract of land was selected and it was suggested that the place be called Bemis Memorial Park.

Through the generosity of a great grandson, George W. Bemis of Independence, Iowa, a monument to Capt. Edmund Bemis will be erected in the park this fall, and it is thought later one to the memory of Lieut. Jonas Bemis Sr., and one in honor of the fourteen grandsons of Samuel Bemis who served in the War of the Revolution, will be erected through the generosity of members of the Bemis family.

The Park is to be placed in the hands of nine trustees to beautify and embellish as they think best. The trustees are to receive and expend such funds as may be placed in their hands for such a purpose.

When the trustees so decide and it is agreeable to the town of Spencer they are to deed the same to the inhabitants thereof to be kept and known forever as "Bemis Memorial Park."

The following are the names of the trustees:

Walter C. Bemis, Henry M. Tower, John G. Avery, Dr.



SAMUEL, BEMIS MONUMENT.

*(Photo by C. W. Lin.)*

Alonzo A. Bemis, George A. Craig, Dr. Ephraim W. Norwood, Henry Bemis, E. Harris Howland, Joel S. Bullard.

The Trustees would also like funds with which to erect a suitable log cabin for a care-taker of the grounds, and to put in an old-fashioned well sweep, and believe in time money will be forthcoming for such purposes. When all the work outlined is completed the Park will be a most delightful place for public resort, a place of just pride to the Bemis family and the town of Spencer, and its educational value to the youth of each succeeding generation beyond computation.

Below is a complete list of donors to the monument fund:

Allen, Mrs. George A.  
 Avery, Mrs. John G.  
 Adams, Allen  
 Bemis, Lewis T., Spencer  
 Bemis, Henry, Spencer  
 Bemis, Lewis D., Spencer  
 Bemis, Theodore J., Spencer  
 Bemis, Henry W., Spencer  
 Bemis, Frank B., Boston, Mass  
 Bemis, Cheney, Spencer  
 Bemis, George E., New York City  
 Bemis, H. E., Boston  
 Bemis, Eugene, Boston  
 Bemis, Joshua, Spencer  
 Bemis, Mrs. David, Spencer  
 Bemis, Amasa T., Spencer  
 Bemis, Charles E., Spencer  
 Bemis, Tilly, Brookfield  
 Bemis, George, Spencer  
 Bemis, Mrs. Phœbe Anna, Spencer  
 Bemis, David, Leicester  
 Bemis, Alvin H., Dell Rapids, So. Dakota  
 Bemis, H. C., Spencer  
 Bemis, John E., Goodwin, So. Dakota  
 Bemis, Charles, South Bend, Indiana  
 Bemis, Albion F., Foxboro, Mass.  
 Bemis, Prof. Edward W., New York  
 Bemis, A. Edwin, Worcester  
 Bemis, Mrs. George 2d, Spencer  
 Bemis, Emily P., Spencer  
 Bemis, Eleanor E., Boston  
 Bemis, Henry E., Lebanon, Kansas  
 Bemis, Moses, Worcester  
 Bemis, George H.  
 Bemis, Waldo L.  
 Bemis, Oscar W.

Bemis, Harvey W.  
Bemis, Jonas, Charlton Depot, Mass.  
Bemis, Jonas Jr., Charlton Depot, Mass.  
Bemis, Harriet, Charlton Depot, Mass.  
Bemis, Hattie, Charlton Depot, Mass.  
Bemis, Mrs. Florence Adams, Charlton Depot, Mass.  
Bemis, Sarah J., Worcester  
Bemis, Adna D., Welchville, Maine  
Bemis, Frank W.  
Bemis, Albert L.  
Bemis, Herbert B.  
Bemis, Milton Amasa, age one month  
Bemis, Alonzo Amasa D. D. S.  
Bemis, Mrs. Nellie I.  
Burkill, Mrs. A. Mattie  
Bullard, Joel S., Spencer  
Comins, Mrs. Pamela K., Spencer  
Converse, Mrs. George C., Brookfield  
Capen, H. H., Spencer  
Capen, Miss Elida M., Spencer  
Conger, Mrs. F. E., North Brookfield  
Curtis, Miss Anna S., Spencer  
Clark, Mrs. C. Bemis, Spencer  
Desoe, Mrs. Edward G., West Springfield  
Drury, Frank A., Spencer  
Drury, Mrs. Franklin, Spencer  
Draper, Mrs. H. P., Spencer  
Denison, Elias Bemis, Portland, Maine  
Denison, William B., Newton, Mass  
Estey, Mrs. Florence  
Fanning, Mrs. Ida  
Guilford, Miss P. Maria, Spencer  
Green, Mrs. E. M., Spencer  
Harrington, Mrs. C. G., Worcester  
Harlow, Miss Margaret, Worcester  
Howland, Henry P., Spencer  
Howland, Lewis, Brookfield  
Howland, E. Harris, Spencer  
Howe, Charles S., Brookfield  
Heffernan, William J., Spencer  
Jones, Asa T., Colorado Springs, Colorado  
Jones, Jarvis H.  
Jones, Warren J.  
Jones, Frank E.  
Jones, Marion J.  
Luke, Mrs. Lydia Howe, West Newton, Mass.  
Lamb, Mrs. A. George, Worcester

Merrick, Mrs. Estes L., Spencer  
 Norwood, Mrs. E. W., Spencer  
 Prouty, Mrs. George P., Spencer  
 Smith, Mrs. Fred P., Spencer  
 Starr, Mrs. Flora E.  
 Smith, Mary L. Howe, Brookfield  
 Sawyer, Mrs. Emma  
 Angella N. Spooner, Jersey City, N. J.  
 Tower, Henry M., Spencer

---

### Breathes There the Man.

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

Breathes there the man with soul so dead  
 Who never to himself hath said,  
 This is my own, my native land !  
 Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned,  
 As home his footsteps he hath turned  
 From wandering on a foreign strand !  
 If such there breathe, go, mark him well;  
 For him no minstrel raptures swell;  
 High though his title, proud his name,  
 Boundless his wealth as wish can claim,  
 Despite those titles, powers, and pelf,  
 The wretch, concentrated all on self,  
 Living, shall forfeit fair renown,  
 And, doubly dying, shall go down  
 To the vile dust from whence he sprung,  
 Unwept, unhonored, and unsung.

---

### IN CONCLUSION.

The author is not an apologist by nature and seeks not on the contents of this book the "kindly indulgence of a critical world." He has made an earnest, and as he believes, a worthy endeavor to gather historical treasures and present them in permanent form for general use, and all this of necessity had to be accomplished in less than four months, in addition to attending to his business as usual. Could more time have been taken no doubt the text might have been improved and the matter better classified and arranged. The work has been projected and finished with Lincoln's motto in mind, "Do your best. If not that, then the best you can."

The writer has not consciously "drawn upon his imagination for facts"; and no unqualified statement has been made unless it appeared to be the truth.

The author has taken much pleasure in compiling this work and trusts the same, as a whole, may meet the approval of his fellow-citizens.

# ILLUSTRATIONS.

---

	PAGE.
Henry M. Tower,	3
Paul Dudley Esq.,	8
Ye Narragansett Fort Fight,	12
Obadiah Wood's Seal,	20
Bemis and Wood Map,	23
House of Nathan Bemis Sr.,	24
House of Nathan Bemis Jr.,	25
House of Hannah Green,	26
House of Cheney Bemis Sr.,	27
Cheney Bemis Sr.,	28
John G. Avery,	31
Rude Log Cabin,	32
The Stealthy Indian,	33
Joshua Bemis,	36
Moses Bemis,	37
George Bemis,	38
Persis (Guilford) Jones,	40
Persis (Bemis) Guilford,	42
Soapstone Kettle,	43
Indian Pestle and Axe,	44
Joel Howe,	45
Foster Bemis,	49
Lewis Bemis,	50
William Bemis Sr., House of	51
Jonas Bemis Sr., House of	52
David Bemis,	53
Old Sun Dial,	54
The Bemis Elm,	55
Pair of Andirons,	56
Edmund Bemis' Powder Horn,	58
Seven Mile River Bridge,	63
Chloe (Bemis) Livermore,	64
Spencer Scenery,	65
Drive in Spencer Public Park,	67
Bemis Hill,	70
Moose Lake and Public Park,	72
Hiram Howe,	75
Summer Residence Dr. A. A. Bemis,	76
The Old Bemis Mansion House,	78
William Howe,	81
Elias Howe Jr. Monument and Grounds,	83



Alphonzo Howe,	85
Ancient Chestnut Tree,	87
Capt. Edmund Bemis House,	89
First Sewing Machine,	91
Elbridge Howe,	93
Tyler Howe,	95
The Old Howe Homestead,	96
Elias Howe Jr.,	98
Cloth Sewed on First Sewing Machine,	99
Mrs. Lydia Howe Luke,	100
Elias Howe Sr.,	101
Alpha Bemis,	102
Elias Bemis,	103
Thomas A. Prouty,	104
Polly (Bemis) Howe,	105
Anna (Bemis) Capen,	106
Catherine (Bemis) Howland,	108
Dexter Bemis,	110
Elias Howe Bronze Statue,	112
Lieut. Frederick A. Bemis,	114
Elias Howe Jr. Birthplace Tablet,	115
Fanny (Bemis) Howe,	116
Sally Bemis Sampler,	118
Bemis Cover Quilts,	120
Old No. 9 Red Schoolhouse,	128
Maria L. Merrick,	129
Bemis Family Group,	132
John Bemis,	134
Pliny Snow,	135
Daniel Ball,	136
Daniel Ball's Peg Factory,	137
Napoleon B. Prouty,	139
Ruel Jones,	140
Fragment Church Bell,	141
Betsey (Beers) Adams,	145
Old Mile Stone,	146
The Mason Inn,	147
Horatio Hall,	148
Polly (May) Tower,	153
Joseph Garfield Jr.,	154
The Last Bear Shot in Spencer,	155
William May House,	156
Capt. John Newhall House,	157
George Washington Bemis,	159
District No. 2 Schoolhouse,	161
Joseph Bemis House,	162
Sons of Amasa Bemis Jr.,	176
Samuel Bemis Monument,	178

## CONTENTS.

---

	PAGE.
History of Nathaniel Wood,	7
Explanation of Bemis and Wood Map,	23
Inception of the Bemis Monument,	30
Our Ancestors; a poem,	32
Bemis Historical Address,	35
Bemis Revolutionary War Record,	107
Bemis Civil War Record,	113
Fragments of Bemis History,	117
District No. 9 Old Red Schoolhouse,	127
Literary Curiosity,	131
History of the Peg Industry,	133
History of the First Church Bell,	141
Ebenezer Mason's Pear Story,	145
Spencer Distilleries,	149
Joseph Garfield's Bear Story,	153
Stories of the Revolution,	155
Spencer Company of Mounted Men,	157
Biographical Sketch of Geo. W. Bemis,	159
Genealogy of Joseph Bemis and Descendants,	165
Bemis Memorial Park,	177
Conclusion,	181











